Lecturer perceptions of pre-service teachers' English oral proficiency during instructional communication

by

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Supervisor: Professor Rinelle Evans

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree MEd General at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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August 2023

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ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this dissertation, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of ethics for researchers* and the *Policy guidelines for responsible research.*

DEDICATION

To my younger self. You can survive anything.

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I extend my heartfelt gratitude for the invaluable support, mentorship, and guidance offered by my supervisor, Rinelle Evans, throughout the course of these three years. Her unwavering direction and persistent motivation played an indispensable role in enabling me to successfully complete this dissertation. I thank her, especially for always staying positive and for reminding me each time I hit a wall to just keep moving forward. With her signature line: *keep walking*, she motivated me to finish this project. Working with Prof Evans has been one of the most enriching and inspiring experience of my life. I am also thankful to the lecturers who formed part of my research by agreeing to be participants. Thank you for offering up your time and for your significant contributions to my research. Without your input, this dissertation would not have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

English is frequently used as the medium of instruction in South African schools. However, only 9.6% of South Africans are home language speakers of English. This suggests that many South African pre-service teachers are conversationally proficient in English but do not necessarily have the prerequisite proficiency to interpret and transfer the curriculum successfully to meet educational objectives. National policy documents provide minimal guidelines regarding the language performance expected of teachers. This study aimed to establish the perceptions that lecturers have of pre-service teachers' ability to use English effectively when teaching. Existing literature indicates that teachers' inadequate oral proficiency in the language of instruction could have a detrimental effect on learning. Moreover, there is a dearth of research that specifically examines the oral proficiency of South African teachers who utilise English to teach. Existing research on this topic also lacks the inclusion of perspectives from teacher educators who mentor and guide pre-service teachers. This case study had a two-pronged qualitative data-generation process. Data were generated from semi-structured interviews with ten lecturers working at South African institutions of higher learning. These data were transcribed verbatim and then a data analysis strategy that involved grouping responses from the ten participants together, manually coding the data, and categorising the codes was employed. From these categories, themes were identified relating to the lecturers' perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach and the possible assessment thereof. Transcription data suggested that pre-service teachers lack the necessary oral proficiency when using English in the classroom. The findings were that the primary dimensions of communicative adequacy appeared to be **accuracy** (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation), **fluency** that included properties of performance such as pace and pausing, and **complexity** of expression. Using existing assessment protocols and the themes that emerged from the data, criteria were also identified to create a tool to assist pre-service students and their mentors in identifying areas for improving their oral proficiency within an instructional context. Apart from the proposed tool, this study contributes – from the perspectives of lecturers – to our understanding of the challenges faced by speakers of other languages who are required to teach using English.

Keywords: English LoLT, evaluation tool (oral), Instructional Discourse, oral proficiency, pre-service teachers, speaking assessment,

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACTFL	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
COVID-19	Corona Virus 2019
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EIT	Elicit Imitation Test
FLOSAM	Foreign Language Oral Skills Evaluation Matrix
GMIC	General Model of Instructional Communication
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IRF	Initiation, Response, Follow-up pattern
LIEP	Language in Education Policy
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LSP	Language for specific purposes
MOI	Medium of Instruction
MRTEQ	Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications
PIIAL	Policy on the incremental introduction of African languages
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
SAALT	South African Association for Language Teaching
SGB	School Governing Bodies
SPCC	Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TSE	Test of Spoken English

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1. Chapter 1: Overview of the study

"Virtually the entire educational process is mediated through language and yet for years, teachers have begun their careers with no understanding of the nature of language structure, its psychological and social functions, or the ways in which their own specialisation depends on language. Language is at the core of human experience, and it is arguable that all teachers in training, whatever their own subject, should be made aware of its nature and its role" (Hodge, 1981: vii).

1.1 Introduction

In a linguistically diverse country like South Africa, this quote has merit, especially since only 9.6% of individuals identify English as their home language (Statistics South Africa, 2011), which suggests that effective communication in the classroom must be a challenge. Language is a toolbox in education. Every instrument or tool in the toolbox has a function whether it be to communicate, teach, analyse, reflect, or discipline. If the instruments are not sharp or are broken, they cannot be used effectively by the teacher. If teachers are not comfortable or confident in the language which they use for instruction it can have a disastrous impact on education, since "communication-effective communication-is essential to the purposes of schooling" (Barnes,1976 in Silver & Kogut, 2009:3). This is an issue worth pursuing, since as Walsh (2011: 2) argues "any endeavour to improve teaching and learning should begin by looking at classroom interaction".

For education to be successful, teachers must understand the relationship between language and learning and should be able to adapt their English to a level that their learners can comprehend. This is a skill that only a proficient speaker can manage. However, many South African teachers, who may speak English well in a social context, often only have a basic proficiency in English in an instructional context (Evans & Cleghorn, 2010b). Secondly, these teachers also do not necessarily have the prerequisite academic language proficiency to interpret and transfer the curriculum successfully, to meet educational objectives (Dippenaar & Peyper, 2011: 33; Krugel & Fourie, 2014). Furthermore, national policy documents in South Africa provide minimal guidelines concerning the language proficiency of teachers, as it only

states that teachers need "to know how to communicate effectively in general, as well as in relation to their subject(s) in order to mediate learning" (Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2011: 56).

In the context of this research, I contended that South African pre-service teachers might lack the essential level of English oral proficiency required for effective teaching, predominantly due to the fact that a majority of them are not first language speakers of English, which is the primary language of instruction in many schools (Evans & Cleghorn, 2010a). Additionally, I argued that an acceptable oral proficiency in Classroom English should be a basic requirement for South African pre-service teachers (before attaining an education qualification). A pre-service teacher, also called a student teacher, is a (young) adult studying for a degree or diploma in Education with the view of entering the teaching profession after successfully completing four years of study (Dippenaar & Peyper, 2011; Evans & Cleghorn, 2010b; Kellerman, 2017). Classroom English falls under the language for specific purposes (LSP) and focuses primarily on how conversational English is used to "manage the classroom, understand, and communicate lesson content", improve the vocabulary of second language learners, mediate learning, and assess and provide learners with feedback (Erasmus, 2019; Freeman, 2017: 31; Kellerman, 2017; Willis, D., 2015; Willis, J., 1985). With being skilled in Classroom English, I believe that teachers and learners in South Africa can communicate effectively, and learning will take place. Subsequently, I sought to gather data at the source of the student-teachers' education from those involved with their preparation to become teachers i.e., lecturers.

The primary aim of this study was to explore the perceptions that lecturers had regarding pre-service teachers' ability to use English effectively when teaching. This was achieved by interviewing ten experienced lecturers who teach pre-service teachers at four higher learning institutions in South Africa about their perceptions and experiences relating to this topic. These data were supported by an analysis of existing assessment protocols that are used internationally to measure oral proficiency. The data constructed in a semi-structured interview were used alongside the research compiled in the literature review to provide criteria which informed the design of a rough draft of an assessment protocol. This assessment protocol took the form of a scaled checklist and can be adapted and used by pre-service and established teachers as a self-assessment tool to gauge their oral proficiency.

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1.2   Contextual background of the study

The focus of my study was to establish the perceptions that lecturers had of pre-service teachers' ability to use English effectively when teaching. This study was set against the backdrop of a multilingual society. From my readings, it became clear that the intricacies of using English as a medium of instruction and more specifically Classroom English is an information-rich area and the current research available provided a good foundation for my own research. However, the explorations of a small number of researchers provided more insight into my area of focus. The research conducted by Grosser and Nel (2013) focuses on the relationship between the critical thinking skills and the academic language proficiency of prospective teachers while Krugel and Fourie's (2014) findings revealed a clear correlation between the proficiency of learners and teachers. Their research showed that "teachers who lack English proficiency are unable to teach [English] effectively, for they themselves have suffered because of the vicious cycle that has developed in the [South African] education system" (Krugel and Fourie's (2014: 226-227). The research conducted by Butler (2004) which examined the level of English proficiency that elementary school teachers in Taiwan, Japan, and Korea, needed to teach EFL effectively was similar to the focus of my study. The research of Kellerman (2017) was also significant, firstly as it was completed recently in South Africa and provided clarity on the nature of non-native pre-service teachers' English proficiency and identified specific skills that teachers needed to acquire to improve their Classroom English proficiency. Finally, the research conducted by Evans (2005) and Evans and Cleghorn (2010a, 2010b and 2012) provided more insight into the complex language encounters between teachers and learners in South Africa and the instructional dissonance that this could cause.

My study fills a gap in research and policy by using Cummins's theory (1979; 1999; 2003) on Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) to emphasise that effective teaching necessitates more than mere conversational fluency. While traditionally used to describe learners' language proficiency, this theory offers valuable insights when examining the language requirements of teachers. Furthermore, a notable research deficit lies in exploring the perceptions of lecturers who teach, guide and mentor future teachers. The study also contributed to new knowledge in this area by using various existing assessment protocols for language to develop criteria for a

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scaled assessment checklist which can be used as a self-assessment tool to establish the oral language proficiency of pre-service and established teachers in South Africa who use English as a medium of instruction.

1.3   Research problem and questions

South Africa is a linguistically diverse country with many languages contending to be represented equally in the education sector. Policy also recommends that learners be taught in grades 1-3 in their Home Language (USAID 2020). Nevertheless, so far, many parents prefer that their children be taught in English (Gordon & Harvey, 2019). However, many prospective and established teachers might not be familiar enough in English to use it for classroom communication as it is not their mother tongue. This could particularly pose a problem in higher grades where learners are required to develop critical thinking skills as well as their own CALP in all their subjects. In a subject like Life Sciences for example, grade 10 to 12 learners are expected to acquire cognitive skills such as "an ability to critically evaluate and debate scientific issues and processes" and "a level of academic and scientific literacy that enables them to read, talk about, write and think about biological processes, concepts and investigations" (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 8). Could it be that in many cases, learners in South Africa do not acquire these crucial academic skills as their teachers are not proficient in the medium of instruction (MOI) and do not have sufficient knowledge of Classroom English to facilitate learning?

The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) document specifically outlines the objectives for learner proficiency. In contrast, the objectives set out for teacher proficiency in policy documents are often vague. According to the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 Of 2008 Policy On The Minimum Requirements For Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) "It is expected that all new teachers should be proficient in the use of at least one official language as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), and partially proficient (i.e., sufficient for purposes of ordinary conversation) in at least one other official language (including South African Sign Language)" (DHET, 2011:15). The language proficiency requirements stated in the MRTEQ policy document can be considered vague due to the lack of explicit criteria or benchmarks to define what constitutes "proficiency" in the use of an official language as the LoLT. This ambiguity leaves room for different interpretations and

subjective assessments of language skills which may lead to potential uncertainty in the evaluation and implementation of these requirements.

This led me to wonder what level of oral proficiency ought to be required for established and pre-service teachers who teach in South African multilingual classrooms and whether a self-compiled assessment protocol could help establish this proficiency. Studies like those conducted by Donald et al. (2017) and Nel et al. (2017) show that mother-tongue instruction is more advantageous to learning and although South African language policies (Schuring, 1993; DBE, 1997) advocate the use of mother-tongue instruction in the Foundation Phase (Grade 1 to 3); this is not always the case in practice. This ideal is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, many African languages do not receive as much funding as Afrikaans or English to develop and create study material. Secondly, in urban areas, there are too many different home languages to establish a dominant one which can be used for instruction. Ultimately, numerous parents opt for English as the LoLT for their children, driven by the belief that it will offer them enhanced prospects in a globalised career landscape.

Against this background, the purpose of this study was to establish lecturers' perspectives regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service South African teachers who use English as a medium of instruction. To address this issue, the following primary research question had to be answered:

- How do teacher educators perceive the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach?

Only after answering the primary question could, I address the secondary question, which was:

- What criteria ought to be considered as key when assessing the oral proficiency of South African teachers who use English?

1.4 Rationale

My study forms part of a larger research project which aims to develop the linguistic proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English as a medium of instruction. My personal interest in instructional communication started as a novice teacher when I was teaching English, in a linguistically diverse urban classroom in Pretoria. English was a second or third language for most of the staff and learners, even though it was the primary language of instruction. As a result, it was extremely difficult to meet educational objectives as some of the learners could not even read English with full comprehension. Many of my colleagues, who taught other subjects, also struggled to communicate effectively with the learners using English as a medium of instruction. However, few of them were aware of the significant relationship that exists between language and learning.

I have since also mentored five pre-service teachers and found that instructional communication and specifically the use of Classroom English is an area that many novice teachers struggle with. Furthermore, there were no guidelines that teachers could use to improve their practice. Through my studies and my experience and observations, while teaching, I concluded that the only way to be skilled at teaching a subject in a second language is by developing Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. This research was important to me on a professional level as well, as it could improve my own oral proficiency and thus my teaching practice. This research was also valuable to teaching practice in general as it shed light on the current oral proficiency of South African teachers who teach in a language that is not their own.

With this research, I explore a complex and unaddressed issue in South African education and perhaps also contribute to the development of an intervention programme for pre-service teachers to improve their knowledge of and skills relating to Classroom English.

1.5   Working assumptions

Certain assumptions were important considerations for my research questions. However, as they did not fall within the scope of my study, I listed the pertinent ones below with sources from relevant literature. I listed my working assumptions in this specific way for a few reasons. First, it helps to establish a solid foundation for the research from existing literature and gives a clear structure for the analysis that follows. Second, I organised the assumptions in a logical order so that they build on each other and make sense together. Lastly, this arrangement of assumptions shows that I have a good understanding of the topic and considered different perspectives, which strengthens the overall findings and conclusions of the study.

- Education in South Africa is problematic, complex, and unequal. (Bernstein, 2013, Howie, 2003; Howie et al., 2008)
- These educational problems stem from the Language of Learning and Teaching. (Nel et al., 2017)
- From a sociocultural perspective, language is important for learning and is not developed in isolation (Erasmus, 2019; Kellerman, 2017).
- South African teachers predominantly use English as the medium of instruction (De Wet, 2002; Evans & Cleghorn, 2010b, 2012; Grosser & Nel, 2013; Kellerman, 2017).
- English is commonly used as a language of instruction in South Africa at schools and universities and yet it is a language with which most South African teachers are unfamiliar (Dippenaar & Peyper, 2011; Erasmus 2019; Evans & Cleghorn, 2010b; Howie, 2003; Kellerman, 2017).
- Classroom English does not always form part of teacher education and is lacking. (Evans & Cleghorn 2010b)
- The learners often struggle to grasp the work because their teachers do not have the necessary CALP to use Classroom English effectively to facilitate learning (Evans & Cleghorn, 2010b; Grosser & Nel, 2013; Theron & Nel, 2005).

1.6   Research design and methodology

In order to explore lecturers' perspectives on the oral proficiency of pre-service South African teachers, who teach using English, I used a qualitative case study research design. This case study had a two-pronged qualitative data-generation process in the form of semi-structured

online interviews and a meta-analysis of existing assessment protocols for assessing oral proficiency. These protocols include the:

- Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' speaking assessment (ACTFL)
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS)
- Foreign Language Oral Skills Evaluation Matrix (FLOSAM)
- Elicited Imitation Test (EIT)
- Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC)
- Test of Spoken English (TSE)
- Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC)
- Flanders' Interaction Analysis system
- Kellerman's (2017) Classroom English Proficiency Rubric

These protocols are discussed in more detail in more detail in Chapter 2. The qualitative methodological approach was an effective research strategy as it provided a holistic and in-depth view of current perspectives about the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers as well as a thorough examination of existing assessment protocols used to examine oral proficiency.

1.7   The research site, participants, and sampling

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, access to schools and universities was limited. Subsequently, for the most part, data for this study were collected using virtual sites such as Google Forms, email and Zoom. The preliminary data for this study were constructed from the research I gathered on the subject during my literature review. This study also forms part of a larger study relating to Instructional Communication and Classroom English led by my supervisor as principal investigator. She was instrumental in aiding me with a plethora of sources that informed my study. Participants for my study included ten lecturers (also referred to as teacher educators) who present education, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) or language methodology as a subject at a South African higher institute of learning. The data were collected through online interviews completed by the primary participants who were selected using convenience sampling. The initial participants were recruited via a research notice posted on the website of the South African Association for Language Teachers explaining

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the study and requesting interested lecturers to respond. This notices only attracted a small pool of participants who gave me the contact details of additional people who they deemed might be interested in participating. I emailed these individuals, and a few agreed to participate. This is a form of snowball sampling.

1.8   Data generation

In this case study, the qualitative data generation process had two facets. Primary data was collected through interviews in chapter 4, while secondary data was generated by conducting a meta-analysis of existing assessment protocols in chapter 2.The primary research question of my study focused on the perceptions that lecturers had of pre-service teachers' ability to use English effectively when teaching. Prior to conducting my research, I applied at my institution for ethical clearance, which was granted. New data aimed at answering this question was generated through a virtual semi-structured interview of no longer than 60 minutes which explored the perceptions of ten lecturers involved in teacher education, regarding the language proficiency of South African pre-service teachers and the efficacy of an oral proficiency assessment protocol. I provided the participants with information regarding the purpose of my study before the scheduled interview. The online interviews were conducted in English on the virtual platform, Zoom, at a time most convenient to the participants and only the audio was recorded. The secondary research question of my study focused on the criteria that ought to be considered key to assessing oral proficiency. This direction was important as South African policy documents that list requirements are vague when it comes to language proficiency. The minimum requirements for teacher education qualifications, as set out by the Department of Higher Education and Training, states that teachers need "to know how to communicate effectively in general, as well as in relation to their subject(s) in order to mediate learning" (DHET, 2015:20). However, there are no guidelines, criteria, or measurement protocols available that can effectively measure this communication requirement.

Finally, I used a meta-analysis of existing assessment protocols to investigate some strategies that other countries have used in an effort to develop possible criteria for a preliminary scaled checklist that could be used as a self-assessment tool to establish oral proficiency in English in a South African context. I also used this meta-study to develop additional questions for my semi-structured interview aimed at discovering the lecturers' thoughts on an assessment protocol for measuring oral proficiency.

1.9   Data analysis and storage

To establish teacher educators' perceptions of the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers, I interviewed ten experienced lecturers and asked them to describe the verbal behaviour of the pre-service teachers who use English as a language of instruction. These virtual interviews were transcribed verbatim. I first read through the interviews to develop a picture of what my participants had said. During this reading, I made notes in the margins regarding ideas that I found interesting. Thereafter, I grouped the data according to questions. In other words, I grouped all the answers to each question together. I then worked with the data manually using open coding, by hand, to generate categories that illustrate the lecturers' perceptions of the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers who use English to teach as well as their opinions about the efficacy of the intended assessment protocol. These findings were also interpreted and discussed using the conceptual framework.

1.10 Quality criteria

According to Creswell (2014: 201), "Validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research". The trustworthiness of the study was ensured by being aware of potential personal bias and by being as neutral and objective as possible. As I am an English language teacher, I am predisposed to certain ideas about language proficiency as I must assess the language proficiency of learners daily. However, the level of language proficiency expected from a South African teacher is not necessarily the same as that which is expected from a person who is trying to master a language. My experience in language education is also beneficial as I am aware of the challenges that learners and teachers face using a language that is not their mother tongue.

Thus, to ensure trustworthiness, I asked ten lecturers, who are involved in practical education or language methodology, to provide their perspectives on oral proficiency assessment protocols. Their responses were compared to provide a comprehensive look at the criteria which were considered key to assessing oral proficiency. I also asked another researcher who is not invested in the study as well as my supervisor to check the collected data to make sure that the data were not distorted according to bias and free of material error. This process

is called peer debriefing and external audit (Creswell, 2014). Trustworthiness was also promoted by using triangulation, which means that data were collected from multiple participants from diverse settings. Furthermore, during the process of analysing the data I illustrated where the data were incomplete, seemed problematic or showed too many discrepancies. It was important to acknowledge these discrepancies in my study as "real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce" (Creswell, 2014: 202). This improved the trustworthiness of the data as I now have a better understanding of the different variables which contribute to the behaviour, feelings, and experiences of the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 354). Furthermore, I engaged in prolonged engagement with the data, spending sufficient time immersed in the information to develop a deep understanding of the nuances and patterns. This prolonged engagement contributes to the confirmability of the study by minimising the potential influence of preconceived notions or biases during the analysis process. Finally, I also kept a clear audit trail of the generation of my data, transcription, coding, and findings and then correlated these findings with references from the literature available on this subject.

Overall, by employing multiple strategies such as peer debriefing, external audit, triangulation, maintaining an audit trail, and prolonged engagement, I established a robust framework to ensure the trustworthiness and transferability of the collected data in my study.

1.11 Ethical issues

Research in education focuses primarily on the experiences of human beings. Subsequently, this means that the researcher is "ethically responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of the subjects who participate in the study" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 23). Before conducting my study, I had to gain ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria's Research Ethics Committee as my study has human participants. Subsequently, I had to complete an ethical clearance application which was submitted to the institutional ethics board. Initially, there were some issues surrounding the description of my research site as my interviews were conducted via Zoom. However, after carefully rephrasing my description of my research site I received ethical clearance for this research. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

1.12 Project constraints

In this section, I discuss the constraints and limitations that I anticipated when I started conducting this study.

My first concern was time constraints. The analysis and transcription of semi-structured online interviews take a lot of effort and time, as it must be completed carefully. This takes place before the data analysis can even start. For this purpose, my supervisor advised me to hire a specialist to help me transcribe my data and I could complete the analysis soon after each interview. I was also working while completing my studies and would have to carefully prioritise my responsibilities.

A second anticipated constraint was access to resources. I started my research during the initial COVID-19 lockdown and the library was not accessible. The only resources that were available to me were online. This could be problematic as I needed to access certain canonical sources. My supervisor had access to many diverse resources which I was able to use. Alternatively, I made notes on resources I would like to consult and waited until access to the library became available.

There were some methodological limitations as well. My qualitative case study research design had the following possible constraints:

- It is difficult to transfer data constructed in this type of research design to other populations as the findings are often a specific, in-depth account of the particular case. The best way to overcome this constraint was by using triangulation- various data-generation techniques and multiple participants.
- Qualitative research of this design can be subject to the biases and perspectives of the researcher conducting the study. In this case, as I am an English teacher, I have my own ideas about oral proficiency that I had to remain aware of.
- My qualitative case study research design rested on the data generated from interviews. Unfortunately, as my time was limited, I was aware before starting that it would not be possible to interview too many participants. My sample size was small in comparison to a quantitative study, but I designed a detailed interview protocol to ensure data saturation.

- Research in English as a language of learning and teaching can involve a complex web of interrelated factors which could make it difficult to establish the reasons for phenomena that my participants illustrated. For this purpose, I made a point of conducting an extensive literature review to contextualise this topic.
- As I was conducting research with human participants regarding a sensitive issue there were some ethical considerations, I needed to be aware of. I discuss these later.
- The COVID-19 lockdown made it nearly impossible to visit schools to conduct research. As a result, I conducted research on possible alternative methods of conducting my interviews. external factors.

1.13 Scope and delimitations of the study

This study took place between January 2020 and December 2022 – a historic period of global upheaval due to the Coronavirus outbreak. As a result of the restrictions placed in South Africa regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not use any in-service teachers or learners as participants in my study but only used teacher educators (lecturers). I also did not have access to any physical research sites but used only virtual sites to conduct interviews i.e., *Google Forms* for my informed consent forms and *Zoom* or *Microsoft Teams* for my online interviews. A minimum of eight adult participants was envisaged but I ended up constructing data from ten adult participants. Selection criteria included being involved in teacher preparation at a South African institution of higher learning for at least three years. Having some knowledge of assessing oral proficiency was a recommendation. Their age, ethnicity and gender were irrelevant as well as the name of the institution at which they worked. Participants who worked in other speciality fields of Education were not considered. The decision to exclude participants from other speciality fields of Education in the study was made to maintain a focused approach to the specific research objectives. By including only lecturers involved in teacher education, the study aimed to gain specialised insights and expertise directly relevant to the topic of oral proficiency. While this approach may limit the transferability of the findings to a broader educational context, it allowed for a more thorough examination within the specific scope of the study.

I used a qualitative case study research design, and no quantitative data were generated or used. Online interviews were used to collect data from lecturers about their perspectives on

the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers. I used meta-analysis to analyse a few different types of assessment protocols used internationally to assess oral proficiency. I did not conduct any observations or collect any survey data and no new recordings of lessons were conducted. I only recorded the audio part of the interviews that I had conducted with the lecturers. No video data were collected. My research only looked at the perceptions that lecturers had of pre-service teachers' ability to use English effectively when teaching and the criteria that could be used in an assessment protocol to establish said proficiency in a South African context. This means that I did not conduct research on the reading and writing proficiency of these pre-service teachers and I also did not focus on established teachers.

On the next page I provide a graphic illustration of the scope of my study.
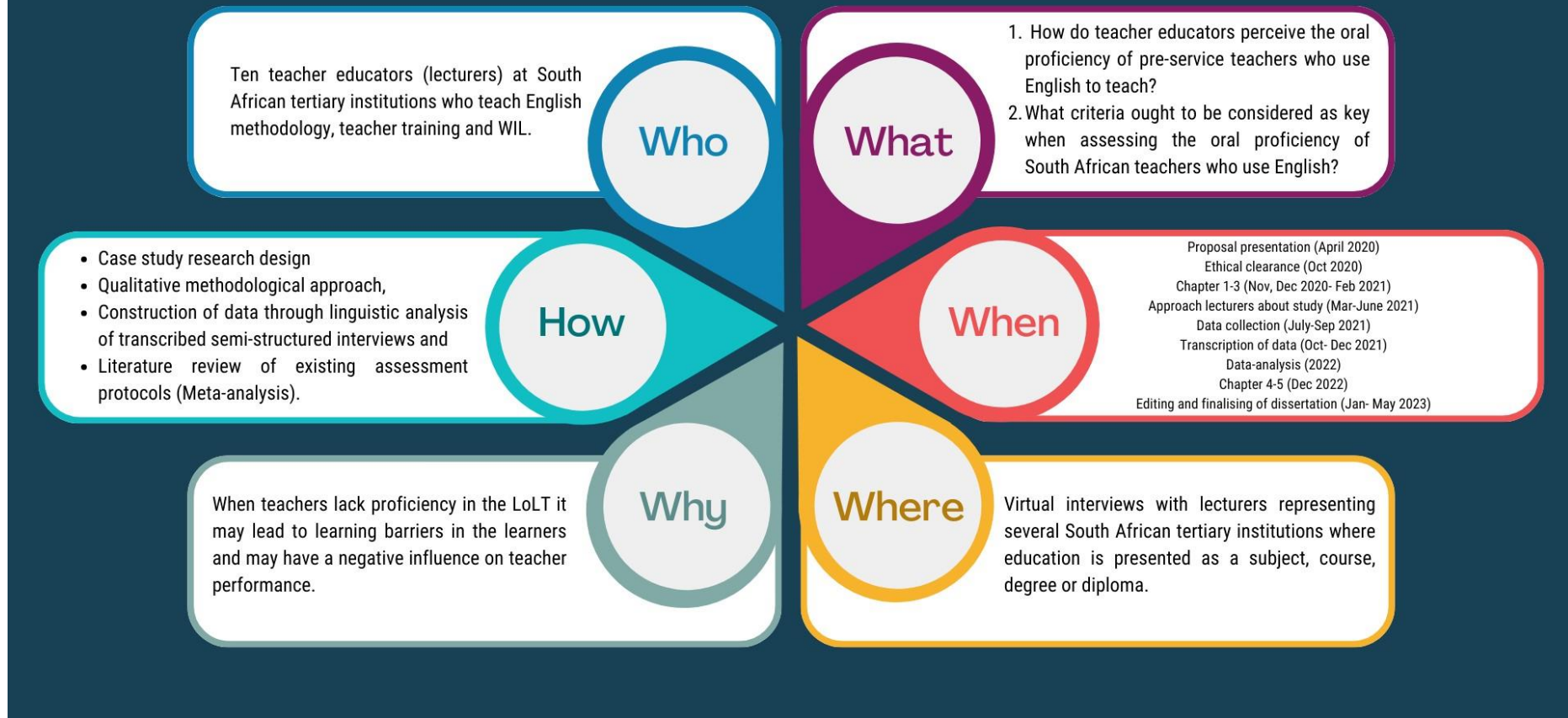
Figure 1.1 A graphic illustration of my research study (designed on Canva)

1.14 Conclusion

This dissertation is structured across five distinct chapters. The inaugural chapter offers an overview, assumptions, background, objectives, and rationale for the study's significance. The subsequent chapter (Chapter 2) delves into the literature that informs this research, introducing both the theoretical foundations found within the literature and how they were leveraged to formulate a conceptual framework. In Chapter 3, an in-depth exploration ensues, outlining the study's design, methodology, and intricate nuances of data construction. Subsequently, Chapter 4 serves as a platform for discussing the findings, meticulously arranged in alignment with the conceptual framework expounded upon in Chapter 2. I used the data collected from the online interviews with **ten** participants from **various** higher education institutions across South Africa along with **a meta-analysis** in my literature review to triangulate my findings. Concluding this dissertation, the final chapter offers a succinct recapitulation of the study's essence, revisiting its central components. Moreover, it emphasises the study's import and its ramifications on policy and practice. Additionally, the chapter furnishes thoughtful recommendations to guide prospective research endeavours in the field.

In the subsequent chapter, I provide an overview of the existing literature. This section commences by examining pivotal facets of the available literature that furnish foundational context for my study. These include studies on communicative competence, studies which illustrated areas of concern regarding oral proficiency, studies outlining the criteria and assessment of oral proficiency, as well as canonical research which I used to develop my theoretical framework such as Walsh's ideas on Classroom English and Instructional Discourse, Flanders' Interaction Analysis system and Cummins' research on BICS and CALP. I also discuss the landscape of language-in-education in a South African context and look at some of the unique challenges that South African teachers face. This provides contextual background for understanding the specific issues and dynamics related to oral proficiency within the South African educational system. This contextual understanding helps frame the significance and implications of my research within the South African educational system.

2. Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1   Introduction

> *"Crucially, in a classroom, it is through language in interaction that we access new knowledge, acquire, and develop new skills, identify problems of understanding, deal with 'breakdowns' in the communication, establish and maintain relationships and so on. Language, quite simply, lies at the heart of everything. This situation is further complicated when we consider that in a language classroom, the language being used is not only the means of acquiring new knowledge, it is also the goal of study: 'the vehicle and object of study'"* (Long 1983: 67 in Walsh 2011).

As we can see from the quote above, proficiency in the medium through which instruction takes place is extremely important and all teachers ought to be language teachers. Lacking this level of proficiency, teachers may encounter challenges in effectively communicating with their learners, potentially leading to barriers in the learning process. I used this chapter to frame my research within the existing literature on instructional discourse. This was implemented to illustrate the importance of good communication skills in the classroom and its crucial role in learning. I also examined existing literature on oral proficiency which might identify possible criteria that can be used to establish the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers. Additionally, I looked at assessment protocols that have been used successfully by other researchers to establish oral proficiency.

As mentioned in my previous chapter, language is already a contentious subject in South Africa as we have twelve official languages all competing for prominence and a tumultuous history where language is concerned. Couple that with the fact that most people receive secondary and tertiary education in English, a language which is most likely not their mother tongue, and one can appreciate the number of academic challenges South African learners and teachers face. It is common knowledge after all that education in South Africa faces numerous challenges. According to the recent condemnatory Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (Mulis et al., 2021) report, most South African children still struggle to read at an appropriate age

level. The 2011 TIMSS report also showed that South Africa's performance in mathematics is amongst the lowest in the world (Bernstein, 2013). As a language teacher, I have always sensed that there is a connection between these educational challenges and the LoLT. My initial assumptions were supported by Nel et al. (2017) who argued that the poor language abilities of learners, which results in inadequate reading, spelling, and writing skills, is one of the main reasons for academic failure in South Africa. However, this led me to wonder how many of these educational problems could be linked to pre-service teachers not being mother-tongue speakers of English but having to use English as a medium of instruction. An idea that I developed further in this chapter.

My previous chapter also hinted at how policy documents in South Africa provide minimal to no guidelines, concerning language proficiency in the medium of instruction, for teachers entering the workforce. This would make it appear as if this issue is not a major concern in the sector. However, my first chapter illustrated how other researchers have shown that academic barriers may occur if the teacher is not proficient in the medium of instruction. My previous chapter also provided a brief overview of assessment and training protocols relating to the language proficiency of teachers, a subject which will be explored further in this chapter. This chapter provides an overview of important developments in the field of instructional discourse in an attempt to address my central argument, which states that South African teachers are not satisfactorily proficient in English to effectively use it as a medium of instruction. My study aims to address this argument by finding answers to the following questions:

- How do teacher educators perceive the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach?

- What criteria ought to be considered as key when assessing the oral proficiency of South African teachers who use English as a medium of instruction?

In an attempt to address these questions, this chapter also explored some of the challenges that other researchers have come across concerning the communicative competence of teachers locally and in other countries.

2.2 Explanatory frameworks

Theoretical framework

The investigation of communication in the classroom is not a new concept. However much of the research focuses on the communication skills of the learners and the oral proficiency of teachers rarely comes into question (Kellerman, 2017). Several theories surfaced during my literature review relating to my research problem. The broader scope which pertained to my research was sociolinguistics which is the study of the relationship between language and society. This field of research focuses on how context shapes language, how language is linked to hegemony and is used to maintain social roles (Bernstein, 1971). It also looks at how the features of a language and its usage, differ in various communities. Basil Bernstein has made invaluable contributions to the role of sociolinguistics in education (Hodge, 1981) as he specifically looks at the restricted and elaborate codes used in pedagogy (Bernstein, 1971 and Bernstein & Solomon, 1999). In other words, sociolinguistics explores the function of language in society and the effect that society has on language development. Some of the drawbacks of sociolinguistics include the tendency to focus on the language habits of the individual, reducing complex language encounters to simplistic categories of right and wrong and sometimes failing to adequately account for context when exploring language usage. For my study, I used a narrower lens to explore teacher educators' perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach. I focused my research on language in the classroom.

Walsh and McCroskey are influential experts in the field of instructional communication. In his research on instructional discourse Walsh (2002) identifies the classroom as a society on its own with its own set of rules relating to communication where the language used by the teacher is also used to "set specific rules and establish meaning" (Spolsky, 2004:3). Walsh (2006) uses a constructivist approach when it comes to instructional communication, he argues that effective instructional communication can be an excellent tool for engaging learners in the learning process as it transforms the classroom into a collaborative environment where conversations are underpinned by respect and trust. Further research into the theory of instructional

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communication uncovered more data for my theoretical framework. McCroskey et al.'s (2006; 2004) works explore how teachers and learners create meaning in the classroom using both verbal and non-verbal language (Mottet et al., 2016:7). Where Walsh's research focuses on the relationships that are built when using instructional communication, McCroskey's research (2015) focuses more on the functionality of instructional communication. McCroskey (2015) argues that the function of instructional communication is conveying knowledge, providing feedback, encouraging critical thinking, and motivating learners. This research also led me to the General Model of Instructional Communication (GMIC) designed by McCroskey et al. (2004) which identifies six essential components of Instructional Communication. This model was used effectively by Segabutla (2015) to explore the perceptions of lecturers' communication skills and whether these skills reflected their instructional competence. This model looks at the rhetorical approach to communication which most teachers still favour. It positions the teacher as the "primary source of information" and learners as receivers (Segabutla, 2015: 27). This model identifies six important components of instructional communication as illustrated in the infographic on the next page.
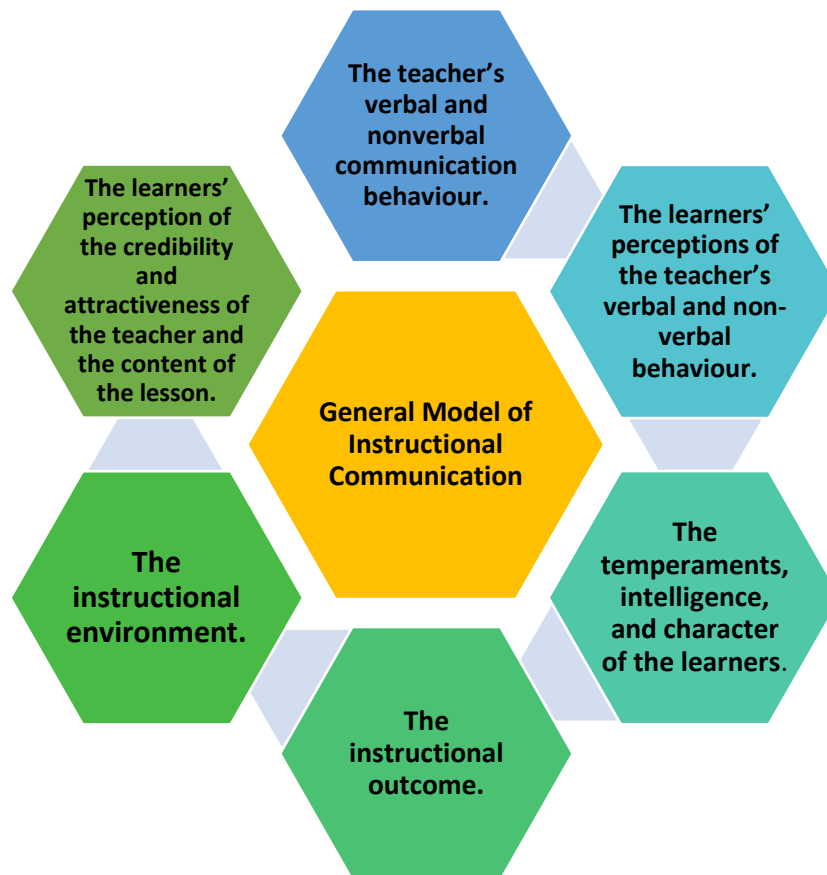
Figure 2.1 General Model of Instructional Communication (Segabutla, 2015: 27)

The purpose of Segabutla's (2015) research was very similar to my research except the focus of my research is the perceptions of lecturers regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers to teach effectively. Subsequently, my research only used three of the components of the GMIC:
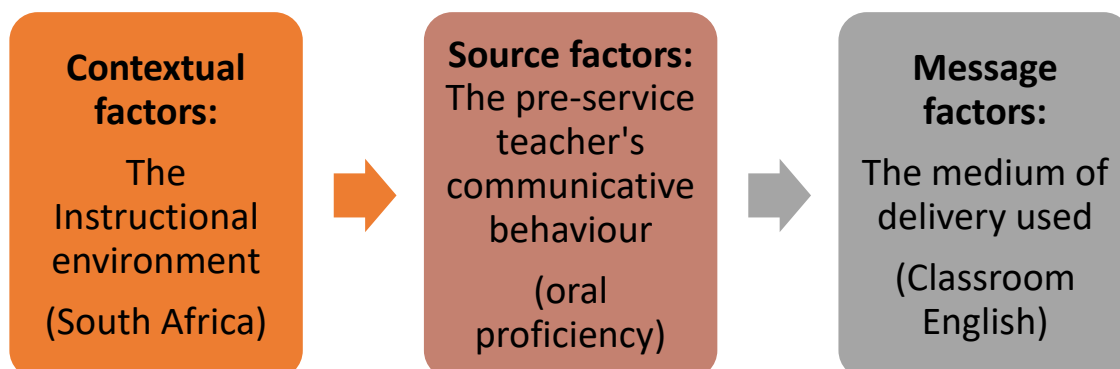
Figure 2.2 Components of GMIC as used in my study.

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Unfortunately, there are more complex components to instructional communication that this model cannot explore (McCroskey, et al., 2004 & Walton, 2014). For that purpose, I decided to take a more comprehensive look at the message factors which McCroskey, et al. (2004) describe as the medium of delivery used. In this context, the use of Classroom English served as a foundation for my exploration of oral proficiency in English. Willis (1985:5) defines Classroom English as "the specialised and idiomatic forms of the English used when teaching". In her "proposed model for training English medium of instruction teachers in South Africa", Uys (2006: 54) states that South African teachers are not proficient in English when used as (LOLT) and this may lead to poor academic achievement in the learners. Uys (2006: 55) argues that pre-service teachers should be trained to use English as a medium of instruction and specifically looks at Classroom English which she defines as a creative and effective tool that teachers use to instruct and organise a class, create a positive learning environment and as a method of communication with their learners. Uys identifies three components to proficiency in Classroom English namely Interpersonal, Pedagogical and General language proficiency. The table below provides more information about each of these components as described by Uys (2006: 56-60):

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Table 2.1 Classroom English proficiency

	Interpersonal language proficiency	Pedagogical language proficiency	General language proficiency
Definition	Language addressing the cultivation of a conducive social environment within the classroom and the implementation of specific routines plays a pivotal role. The language employed by the teacher plays a crucial role in fostering a disciplined and efficiently organized classroom setting.	'The transmission of knowledge, attitudes and skills to a new generation' (Johnson et a/., 1996:8)	A tangible understanding of the grammar, semantics, and pragmatics inherent in the chosen medium of instruction.
Examples	"greetings, - checking attendance, - organising seating and arrangements, - using visual aids, - dividing the class into groups, - handling interruptions such as latecomers and things lost, - controlling and disciplining pupils, - distributing commands, requests, and suggestions"	"preparing lessons on subjects, e.g., History, Mathematics; - providing, organising, and presenting new information; - marking transitions between sections of the work; - providing learners with a frame of reference; - asking questions, - eliciting responses; - setting tasks; - giving instructions; - providing explanations; - summarising and evaluating information."	"The teacher has general knowledge of the syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of English grammar. - The teacher can identify the role of grammar in the construction of meaning in the subject classroom so that learners can develop academic language skills suitable for the specific subject that they are studying. - The teacher understands educational linguistics - how language impacts on teaching and learning - to do their work well."
[Source: Uys, A. H. C. (2006). *A proposed model for training English medium of instruction teachers in South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University).			

Uys' thoughts on Classroom English proficiency shared many similarities with the research of Jim Cummins (1999: 1-6) on Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Kellerman (2017) actually refers to Classroom English as the "steppingstone" between BICS and CALP. According to Jim Cummins (1999), BICS is developed first, through social interactions and consists of informal everyday language used for communication, storytelling, and

humour. In comparison, CALP is a more advanced and formal type of language used in an academic setting which takes several years to develop.
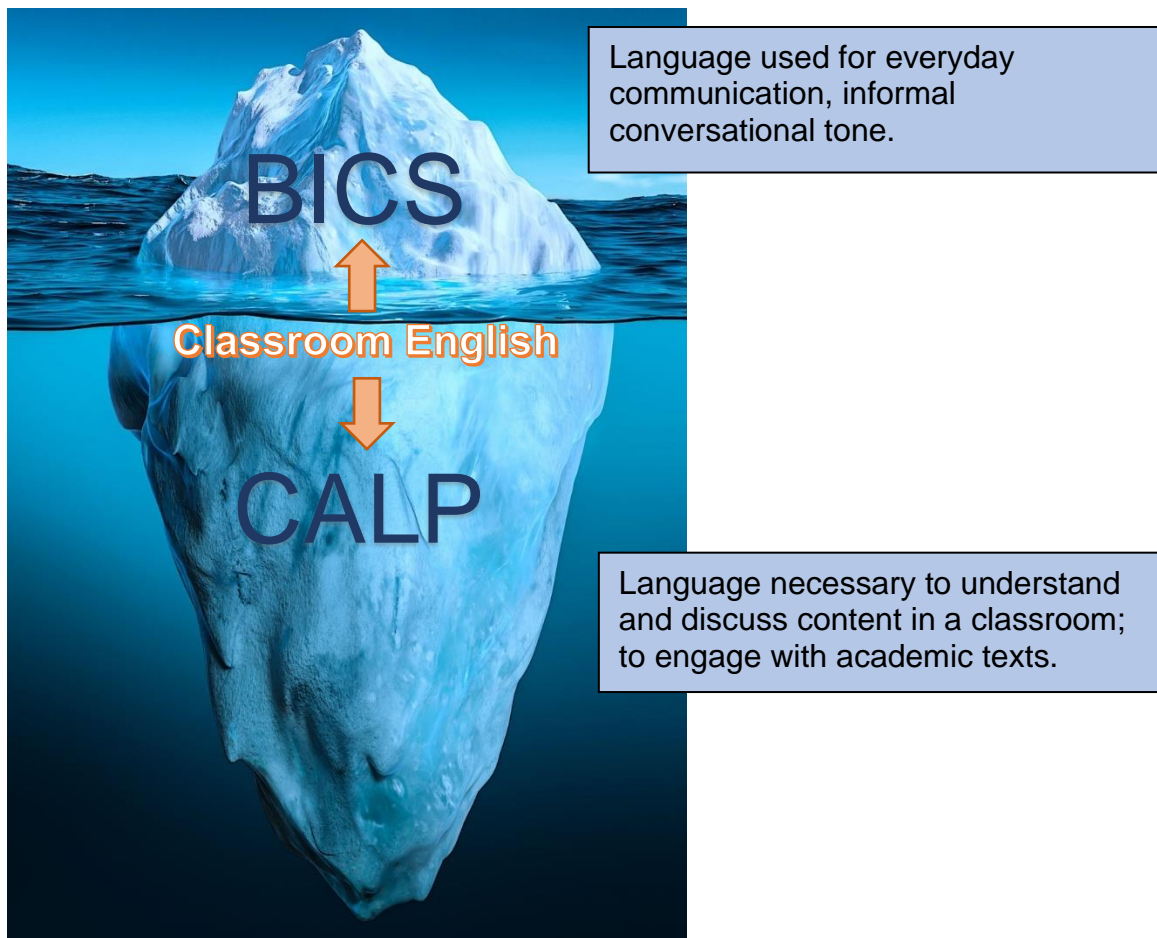
Figure 2.3 An adaptation of Cummins's Iceberg theory (1981)

Cummins' research on BICS and CALP mainly focuses on the oral proficiency of learners and the detrimental effects that may occur if learners do not become proficient in BICS/CALP. However, BICS /CALP can also apply to the oral proficiency of teachers. In order to be effective communicators in the classroom teachers need to develop both their BICS and their CALP. Teachers need BICS to manage the class, give basic instructions, and develop rapport with the learners to keep them engaged and make them feel comfortable. Furthermore, conversation, storytelling, and humour are part of the teaching process. Teachers also need strong CALP as they often must communicate complex information and ideas to the learners. Teachers also need specialised vocabulary and need to be able to modulate their grammar so that their message is concise and clear. Teachers also need advanced language proficiency to

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provide verbal feedback to the learners and facilitate discussions. (Evans & Cleghorn, 2010a, 2010b; Grosser & Nel, 2013; Kellerman, 2017; Krugel & Fourie, 2014; Theron & Nel, 2005;) If South African pre-service teachers are adequately trained and have these linguistics skills in their repertoire it can only have a positive effect on the education environment.
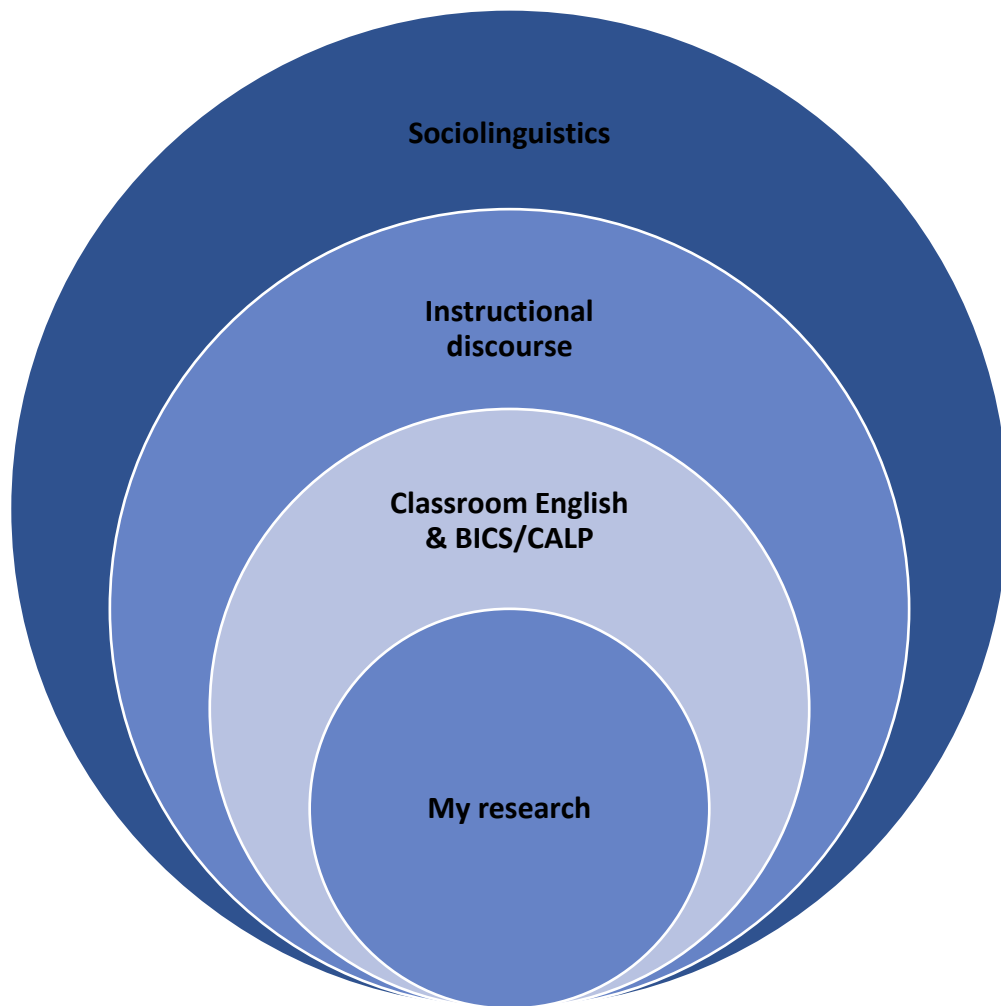
Figure 2.4 Theoretical Framework

Conceptual framework

The theoretical framework illustrated in the previous section demonstrated several theories that I could use in my study to create a conceptual framework which could be used to evaluate the oral proficiency of South African teachers who use English as an LOLT.
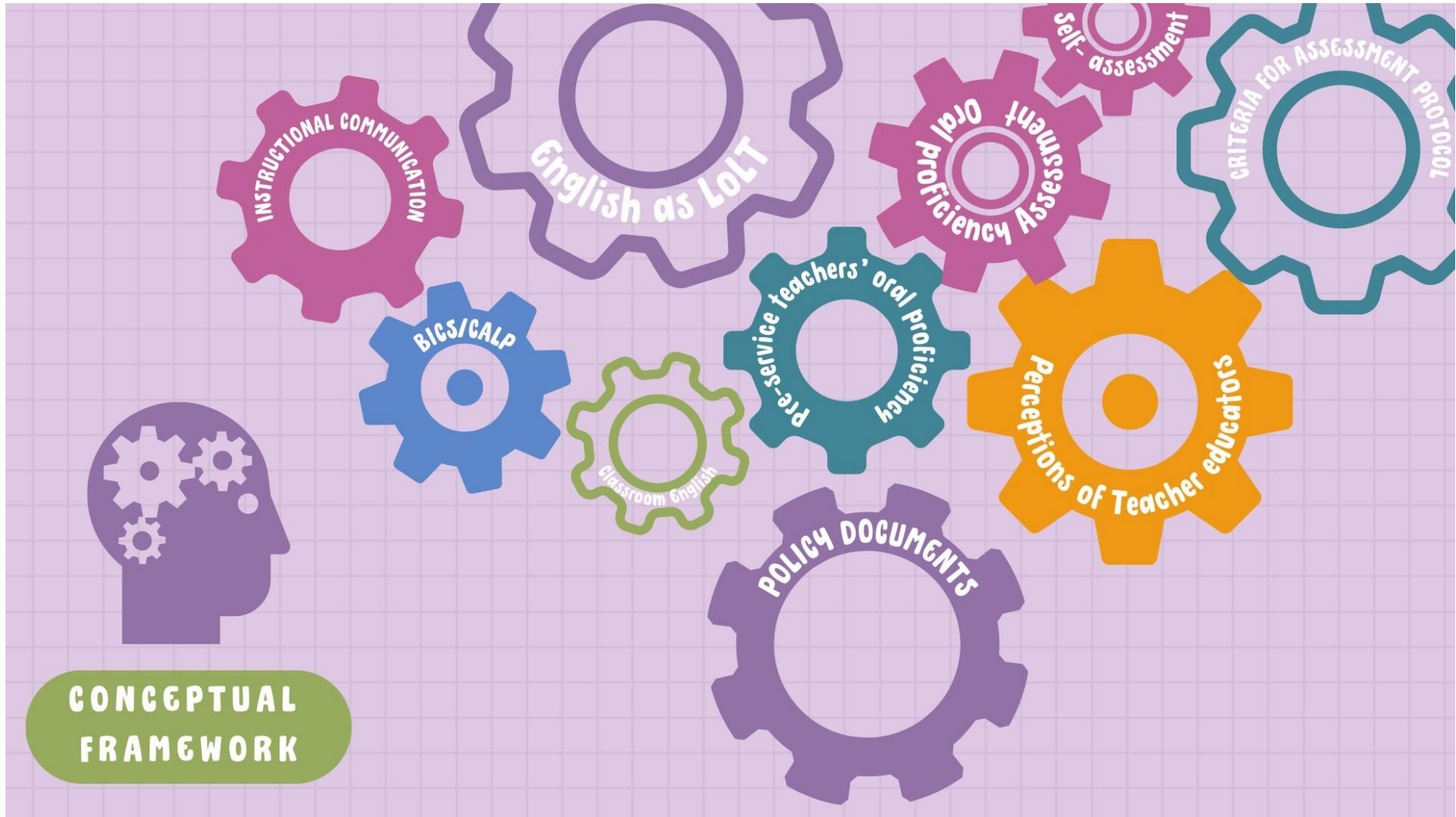
Figure 2.5 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework encompasses several interrelated components represented by various-sized gears. At the core of this framework is the use of English as the language of teaching and learning, which serves as a fundamental concept in this study. This choice of language has implications for instructional communication, as it directly influences how teachers communicate with their learners. One important aspect of instructional communication is the concept of BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). These two components represent different levels of language proficiency and are crucial in understanding how teachers and learners effectively interact in an academic setting.

The perceptions of teacher educators play a pivotal role in this framework. These perceptions, represented by a large gear, reflect the beliefs, attitudes, and understanding of teacher educators towards the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach. Their perspectives shape the strategies and approaches used in teaching and assessing oral proficiency. The oral proficiency of pre-service teachers is another key component within the conceptual framework. This smaller gear represents the language skills and abilities of aspiring teachers in speaking and understanding English. It is influenced by instructional communication, teacher educators' perceptions, and the assessment of oral proficiency.

The assessment of oral proficiency, represented by its own gear, is a crucial aspect of the conceptual framework. This assessment is guided by specific criteria or an assessment protocol, denoted by a gear of its own size. These criteria or protocols serve as guidelines for evaluating the oral language skills of pre-service teachers, helping to determine their proficiency level. Within the framework, self-assessment is also highlighted. This component, represented by a smaller gear, emphasises the importance of individuals reflecting on their own language skills and progress. Self-assessment can contribute to the improvement of oral proficiency as pre-service teachers actively engage in evaluating their own abilities.

By employing the visual representation of gears, my conceptual framework effectively portrays the interdependencies and interactions between the various components, illustrating the complex nature of language teaching and learning.

2.3 An overview of instructional communication

"Language is a critical tool to communicate, to express feelings, desires and thoughts, but most of all to learn." (Madonsela, 2015:448)

2.3.1 Classroom English

As indicated by the quote above language is one of the most important tools in the education sector and unfortunately many teachers are not aware of this which could explain the significant number of learning barriers in South Africa. Language has many functions in the classroom. It is used to greet, facilitate, instruct, discipline, praise and expound content and since "teachers control most of the discourse" (Silver & Kogut, 2009:2) it is imperative that they are proficient in the language used for instruction.

For the purpose of my study, I refer to this use of instructional language as Classroom English which is a type of planned conversational English that teachers use in a classroom for general classroom management, organisation, communication, and instruction. (Willis, J., 1985; Willis, D., 2015). It includes common and simple classroom phrases that teachers and learners use at the beginning, during and after the lesson to facilitate learning and manage behaviour. This type of language usage is often verbose when compared to written English. It is also characterised by repetition and an extensive use of discourse markers (okay, so, like), and it relies largely on contextual and linguistic clues to help facilitate understanding (Willis, D., 2015 & Willis., J, 1985). This includes phatic phrases that the teacher uses frequently in class such as "Good morning, class." In order to use this type of language successfully, teachers need to have good language proficiency and communication skills.

In his research, Stanley Madonsela argues that when the development of language is neglected in the learning process it "could have negative consequences for learners." (Madonsela, 2015:449) The main reason why this important facet is neglected is the mistaken belief that only language teachers are responsible for teaching important language skills. Every teacher should be a language teacher and should focus on assessing, correcting, and promoting language skills in their classrooms as well. Every teacher should also be conscious of the way they use Classroom English in their classroom. It should not be a passive process or something that just happens. As a

result of this mistaken belief subject teachers who do not teach a language, like English, are not expected to have good language skills. This is unfortunate, as teachers in South Africa predominantly use English as a medium of instruction to lecture, instruct, provide directions, uphold discipline in class, ask questions, clarify student ideas, and give praise (Flanders, 1962: 313). It is for this reason that every teacher should have a high degree of oral proficiency in the LoLT, and it should form part of their pedagogy as "the teachers' use of language and their goals must work together." (Walsh, 2011:33) The first place a teacher can start improving their language skills is by researching the field of instructional communication which is aimed at better understanding and improving communication in the classroom (Nussbaum & Friedrich, 2005).

2.3.2 Instructional communication

Extensive research has been done on instructional communication internationally (Butler, 2004; Freeman, 2017; Richards, 2017; Walker & An-e, 2013; Walsh, 2011) and in South Africa (de Wet, 2002; Dippenaar & Peyper, 2011; Erasmus, 2019; Evans & Cleghorn, 2010; Howie, 2003; Kellerman, 2017; Nel & Müller, 2010; Nieman & Hugo, 2010; Van der Walt & Ruiters, 2011). Much of the research in this field focuses on the personal experiences (Butler, 2004) and perceptions (Erasmus, 2019; Theron & Nel, 2005) of teachers who use English as a medium of instruction. Other researchers primarily explore how meaning is affected when teachers and learners use a second language to communicate (Evans & Cleghorn, 2010a, 2010b; Nieman & Hugo, 2010; Silver & Kogut, 2009; Walsh, 2011) as well as the impact on the learners' academic performance (de Wet, 2002; Krugel & Fourie, 2014; Nel & Müller, 2010; Setati, 2001; Taylor & Coetzee, 2013). Some research explored the language proficiency of teachers (Butler, 2004; Grosser & Nel, 2013; Nel & Müller, 2010; Nieman & Hugo, 2010; Pasternak & Bailey, 2004), however, most of the research focuses on the language proficiency of learners (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2014; Manyike & Lemmer, 2014; Nel, Nel & Hugo, 2017; Taylor & Coetzee, 2013; Taylor & Von Fintel, 2016;) and undergraduate students (Erasmus, 2019; Evans & Cleghorn, 2010a, 2010b; Evans & Cleghorn, 2012; Kellerman, 2017; Pretorius, 2002). In this section, I will look at traditional practices in classroom communication and how this relates to oral proficiency.

Walsh (2011) argues that the concept of instructional classroom communication is "both highly complex and central to all classroom activity that performs several functions at the same time: seeking information, checking learning, offering advice and so on" (Walsh, 2011: 23). Classroom discourse usually follows a certain pattern with the teacher Initiating the conversation, the learner Responding and then the teacher providing Feedback or an Evaluation of the learner's response (Hall, 2017; Walsh, 2011). This is referred to as the Initiation-, Response-, Follow-up pattern (IRF) a conversational exchange which is initiated when the teacher asks a question or starts a discussion or debate. This follows with the learners answering the question and is concluded with the teacher following up with evaluation or providing feedback in the form of clarification, praise, guidance, and comprehension checks (Park, Yi, Flores & Nguyen, 2020; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1992; Saswati, 2019). The purpose of the IRF pattern is to support learners in an interactive classroom environment and is crucial in a second language classroom where language learning is enhanced when learners pay attention to the language they hear in the class (Van Lier, 1984).

Kiramba & Smith (2019: 106) criticise the use of the initiation, response, feedback (IRF) discourse pattern in the classroom as they argue that it positions the teacher as "the sole or primary knower within the classroom, transmitting facts to students". If communication in the classroom generally follows this pattern this means that teachers do most of the talking in the classroom (Atkins, 2001; Flanders, 1962; Hall, 2017 and Kiramba & Smith, 2019) which links with the GMIC which I illustrated in my theoretical framework. The fact that the teacher talks so much in the classroom should make it clear why the oral proficiency of the teacher in the LOLT is so important, especially since the teacher is a model of communication for the learners.

Researchers (Hall, 2017; Riordan, 2018; Walsh, 2011) in the field of instructional communication have also identified four important characteristics of instructional communication prevalent in most classrooms, globally. The first feature is the fact that teachers usually control the interaction in a classroom as discussed above. A convention which can be either advantageous or detrimental to the learners, depending on the teacher's skill level. Secondly, teachers should know how to modify their spoken language when addressing school learners of different ages. In this way,

classroom discourse is different from normal speech patterns as "a teacher's speech is slower, louder, more deliberate, and makes greater use of pausing and emphasis" (Walsh, 2011: 25). This modification also referred to as '*teacher talk*' (de Jager & Evans, 2013; Hall, 2017; Walsh, 2003;) is usually coupled with exaggerated gestures and facial expressions which are intended to aid with the learning process by conveying meaning. Walsh argues that this type of behaviour is deliberately used to aid the learners' understanding. He makes an important argument when he also states that it is "highly unlikely that learners will progress if they do not understand their teacher" (Walsh, 2011: 25). With this communication behaviour, the teacher also models the proper articulation and grammatical rules of the target language which is important in the development of the learners' own language skills (Hall, 2017) even more so in the LoLT. In a country like South Africa, a teacher's discourse in the second language may be the only exposure to the language that learners receive. It is important, therefore, that the teacher is proficient in the medium of instruction so that he/she can model the language effectively and modify his/her language depending on the age and skill level of the learners.

The third important characteristic of instructional discourse which Walsh identifies is elicitation, which refers to the approaches used by teachers to elicit a response from the learners. A traditional example of Elicitation would be asking the learners questions, a process which could amount to almost 40% of the lesson time (Hall, 2017). These questions serve a pedagogic purpose as they are aimed at gathering information, determining learners' understanding, ensuring learners' attention, and providing them with an opportunity to practice their language skills when they answer (Hall, 2017). In this aspect, a higher level of language proficiency is required by the teachers as a skilled professional would know exactly which types of questions promote learning and which do not and how these questions should be phrased. It requires skill and navigation of complex issues to make learners feel comfortable enough in the classroom to respond appropriately to questions that challenge their own skill and knowledge level (Sert & Walsh, 2013).

In their exploratory study, Kiramba and Smith (2019) illustrated how something as simple as adding "isn't it" to the end of a sentence can limit the amount of discourse that takes place in the classroom and enable a hierarchal relationship in the classroom

where the teacher is the person with all the authority since "yes" is usually the only acceptable response to this question. This is particularly evident in Sert and Walsh's study (2013) on how teachers respond to learners when they say 'I don't know' in response to a question. This makes it difficult to determine learners' own level of proficiency as well as whether they grasp the content. It also makes it difficult for the teacher to help the learner improve, which integrates with the final feature of instructional discourse identified by Walsh (2011) which is Repair. This is the way that a teacher addresses and corrects the errors that the learners make in the classroom. Making mistakes is part of the learning process (Hall, 2017). However, correcting these errors requires a degree of subtlety and caution, as well as a sizable amount of language knowledge and skills. Language errors can occur on the side of the learner but also the teacher's side as evident in Evans and Cleghorn's (2010b) study on teacher talk, where the science teacher incorrectly referred to *blowing up a balloon* instead of using the word inflate. These types of errors can lead to misunderstanding and confusion in the classroom (de Jager & Evans, 2013) and the skills required for correctly *repairing* involve a great deal of patience and communicative competence. If a teacher does not possess these skills or is ignorant about classroom discourse it could lead to frustration and impatience on the part of the teacher and discomfort on the part of the learner (de Jager & Evans, 2013).

Part of the reason why teachers should receive more education about the importance of language in the classroom is the potential hazards of some of the misconceptions many teachers still have about communication in the classroom. One of the most prevalent misconceptions that teachers harbour about instructional communication is that they should be doing most of the speaking in the classroom and that this leads to learning (Flanders, 1962; Kiramba & Smith, 2019). This practice is particularly dominant in African classrooms where research has indicated "the predominance of teacher-centred instructional practices" (Kiramba & Smith, 2019: 106). This misconception is rooted in the fallacy that a silent class is a "good" or "smart" class because the traditional view is that "teachers as experts who transmit knowledge to passive learners" (Kiramba & Smith, 2019: 105) Subsequently, lessons are structured with activities which keep the learners silent and focused on the teacher who is *in charge* (Evans & Cleghorn, 2010b; Hall, 2017; Kiramba & Smith, 2019; Li & Walsh, 2011; Ousseini, 2019). In fact, research shows that it is more beneficial, intellectually,

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for learners to engage in dialogue and interaction in class and teacher-centred discourse patterns lead to passive students who are not engaged in their own learning process. (Kiramba & Smith, 2019).

How does this relate to oral proficiency? Good language skills do not just mean knowing when to talk and how to use the language, it also means knowing when to be quiet. (Evans, 2006; Walsh, 2002) Furthermore, as I have already illustrated in my first chapter, just because a teacher has good social English skills does not mean that he or she has the necessary academic proficiency skills needed to teach effectively (Cummins, 1989; de Jager & Evans, 2013; Dippenaar & Peyper, 2011; Krugel & Fourie, 2014). Clearly, being proficient in the medium of instruction incorporates more subtle skills than just speaking the language well. In a country like South Africa, the medium of instruction comes with additional challenges. I will examine some of these challenges in the next section.

2.4   Language of Learning and Teaching in a South African context

The South African education sector has a very turbulent history when it comes to the languages used as a medium of instruction since language has frequently been used as a vehicle of power and hegemony. One of the first policies regarding LOLT in 1701 dictated that learners should be instructed in Dutch (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012). In 1822 Lord Charles Somerset declared that English would become the official language of the Cape colony and English schooling would take prominence (Booyse et al., 2016: 101 & Evans & Cleghorn, 2012). This anglicisation policy was one of the main reasons for the exodus of the Voortrekkers from 1836 onwards. During the Apartheid era, language was highly politicised, "the Bantu Education Act of 1953 stipulated that black learners should receive mother-tongue instruction in primary schools with transition to English and Afrikaans from the ninth grade" (Booyse et al., 2016; Evans & Cleghorn, 2012). However, in the late 1980s, many young people became discontent towards this system as they saw Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor and chose to be educated in English instead (Booyse et al., 2016; Carstens & Bosman, 2022; Evans & Cleghorn, 2012). At that time, English was the only other language which could compete with Afrikaans for power and status (Alexander 1997; Madonsela, 2015 & Booyse et al., 2016).

As a result, in the present, there is a strong misconception that African languages have not developed or modernised enough to be able to be used at an educational level and thus remain restricted to underprivileged rural or township schools (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:44). Furthermore, many other misperceptions still exist around English as a medium of instruction, such as it is a high-status language which allows your child to "compete for well-paid jobs and prestigious career opportunities" (Alexander, 1997:2; Alexander, 2004; Heugh, 2007; Heugh, 2013; Probyn, 2009) and therefore many South African parents still choose English schools for their children instead of advocating for mother-tongue instruction (Madonsela, 2015). However, one researcher (Alexander, 1997) also argues that most South Africans will not gain adequate fluency in English in their lifetime to be able to use it to attain these idealised business and career opportunities. This becomes evident at higher education institutions where many young people often struggle with the academic demand of advancing their studies in a language that is not their mother tongue and in which they have a poor foundation. Kajee conducted research (2015) on South African education students from poor socio-economic backgrounds who stated that they struggled to cope with the demand of English and Afrikaans at university and felt at a disadvantage to other students who are mother-tongue speakers of English and Afrikaans. Furthermore, these students also found it difficult to understand the Afrikaans accents of many of their lecturers and fellow students. On the positive side, most of these students realised and were comfortable with the fact that they would have to change their own ideologies about language and develop their skills in English to be successful in the South African education sector. Whether this happens in practice is yet to be determined.

Unfortunately, the issue with language in South Africa is more complex, as conflict still occurs daily as to which language should be the official medium of instruction. The reason for this is that language plays a huge role in our traditions and belief systems. Researchers (Hall, 2017; Khokhotva & Albizuri, 2020; Li & Walsh, 2011)) have recently also established that a teacher's beliefs can have an advantageous or detrimental effect on their teaching practice. Consider that many Afrikaans speakers in South Africa apparently still harbour a deep mistrust towards English and refuse to learn the language because of the British's anglicisation attempts as well as the conflict that arose during the Boer wars (Booyse et al., 2016). In the same vein, in recent years

there has been an increase in the criticism directed at the oppressive history of colonialism and by extension English as a medium of instruction and its effect on education in Africa (Brock-Utne, 2005; Heugh, 2007). Many modern educational theorists (Alexander, 2004; Kaya & Seleti, 2014) encourage the development of a curriculum that is sensitive/inclusive of all cultures, and which advances the study of indigenous knowledge, heritage languages and traditions.

There are a few other issues in South African classrooms that challenge successful classroom communication are diversity (Hall, 2017) and large classroom sizes since teachers cannot communicate individually with the learners (Ousseini, 2019). Many of the issues surrounding language and communication in the classroom could possibly be avoided if the teacher was willing to learn a few phrases in the learner's home language or attempted to improve their understanding of the relationship between language and learning. Teachers could also develop their communicative competence in Classroom English. Madonsela supports this statement when he states that "multilingual countries such as South Africa, classrooms usually comprise learners from different language backgrounds and therefore the language used for teaching and learning requires rethinking." (Madonsela, 2015: 448). The teacher should take the lead with this process by incorporating code-switching into their teaching practice (Madonsela 2016). However, this is not feasible in South Africa if neither the teacher nor the learner is fully proficient in the medium of instruction. Many South African teachers who are not familiar with research in instructional communication still consider code-switching as a negative practice (Hall, 2017; Madonsela, 2015) even though it is encouraged by policy documents (DHET, 2015).

Researchers (de Jager & Evans, 2013; Dippenaar & Peyper, 2011; Kellerman, 2017) argue that all teachers regardless of their subject need to be skilled in the Language of Learning and Teaching, to teach effectively. This is a problem in South Africa, as English is the medium of instruction, preferred by many School Governing Bodies (SGB), past grade 4 (de Jager & Evans, 2013; Evans & Nthulana, 2018) but it is the home language of only 9.6% of South Africans. This means that most South African teachers teach (and learners receive instruction) in a language that is not their mother tongue and in which they often do not have full proficiency. Apart from this, there are significant ideological issues relating to language use in South Africa that warrant a mention here, as language cannot be separated from "larger social, political, economic

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and historical discourses" (Kajee, 2015) and language policy is enforced by people with power and authority who do not consult the people these policies affect (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997: 196)

The research completed in South Africa concerning the language proficiency of teachers paints a bleak picture (Nieman & Hugo, 2010). In a study conducted by Theron and Nel (2004), teachers were asked to rate their CALP and they judged their formal language proficiency to range between good and excellent. However, recent studies have shown that that is not the case and that most teachers are not proficient enough in CALP to use English to interpret and transfer curriculum content (Evans & Cleghorn, 2010; Evans & Nthulana, 2018; Nel & Müller, 2010; Nieman & Hugo, 2010; Van der Walt & Ruiters, 2011). A study conducted by Krugel and Fourie (2014) on the language skills of South African teachers and learners, found that the average grade profile of English teachers was between Grade 9 and Grade 12. This means that they had the average language skills of a high school learner which suggests that their academic language proficiency is very low, and this had a detrimental effect on the language proficiency of the learners in their classes.

Krugel and Fourie (2014) also reported that many teachers overestimated their knowledge of the English language. More research suggested that many teachers have misconceptions about the role of language in learning, are intolerant of diversity and lack sufficient knowledge about incorporating multilingualism in the classroom or curriculum (Theron & Nel, 2004; Van der Walt & Ruiters, 2011). Researchers (Butler, 2004; Evans & Cleghorn, 2010; Freeman, 2017; Van der Walt & Ruiters, 2011; Walker & An-e, 2013) also argue that there is a need for suitable intervention regarding the language proficiency of teachers as there is a mismatch between classroom reality and policy documents concerning the expectations of language proficiency of South African teachers who use English as a LOLT. This was made evident by Evans and Cleghorn (2010) who also determined that several policies need to be re-evaluated concerning training and assessing the language proficiency of pre-service teachers as they currently do not gauge language proficiency at all. Freeman (2017) also argued that professional development that focuses on language proficiency should focus on specific contextual needs that teachers might have in their communities. Finally, research on the language proficiency of teachers who use English as a medium of

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instruction is limited to primary schools (Evans & Cleghorn, 2010; Freeman, 2017; Nieman & Hugo, 2010) and university students or pre-service teachers (Dippenaar & Peyper, 2011; Erasmus, 2019; Grosser & Nel, 2013; Kellerman, 2017; Nel & Müller, 2010; Nieman & Hugo, 2010; Pretorius, 2002; Van der Walt & Ruiters, 2011). There was a gap in the research about the level of oral proficiency required by South African teachers, who use English as a medium of instruction, in a multilingual classroom, regardless of the subject they teach. My study addresses this gap by investigating lecturers' perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach and by developing an assessment protocol that can be used to assess oral proficiency of pre-service teachers.

2.5   Oral proficiency in the education domain

Oral proficiency in the medium of instruction is an extremely important component of Instructional Discourse. Proficiency in a language can be described as an individual's ability to use language successfully to organise ideas, create meaning and "explore, narrate and reflect on our experiences and knowledge" (Nel et al., 2017: 94) and according to the same authors, oral proficiency is a crucial pillar for developing reading and writing ability in a language.

To "engage in cognitively complex operations" (Van der Walt & Evans, 2019:11) learners need to develop their English language proficiency to a sophisticated level known as CALP (Cummins, 1999I hold the viewpoint that achieving these objectives hinges on learners' teachers possessing an elevated degree of English oral proficiency, especially when employing it for instructional purposes. This does not simply mean that they understand and can speak the language. After all, "fluency is not academic literacy (Van der Walt & Evans, 2019:11). A high level of proficiency means that teachers can manipulate the language to achieve a whole range of academic objectives; and includes cognitive skills such as "comparing, classifying, synthesising, evaluating and inferring" (Van der Walt & Evans, 2019:15). Subsequently, I argue that many South African teachers do not have this prerequisite level of proficiency in Classroom English and may thus struggle to teach effectively, often resulting in "instructional dissonance" which Evans (2005:168) defines as "the ignorance or denial of hindrances, barriers and distortions that permeate and negatively affect interpersonal communication between the instructor and student".

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Studies also showed that this lack of proficiency could have a detrimental effect on the development of learning barriers in learners (Nel & Müller, 2010; Nel et al., 2017; Theron & Nel, 2005). The way that teachers talk and the level of language skills they have are crucial components to successfully promoting learning especially in a classroom where the medium of instruction is a second language (Hall, 2017). J. McCroskey and L. McCroskey (1988), argue that "communication competence is the adequate ability to pass along or give information; the ability to make known by talking or writing." (J. McCroskey & L. McCroskey 1988: 3) Before we can determine the criteria for oral proficiency that teachers require to teach effectively, we first need to look at the research that attempts to examine the benefits of oral/communicative proficiency in education.

Walsh (2011) argues that the effective use of language refers to language use which promotes learning, and that the teacher can accomplish this by paying attention to their choice of language that they use in the classroom and by being more aware of their communication style. In other words, oral proficiency does not just refer to the grammatical use of the language but incorporates an academic understanding of how language works as well as its function in facilitating learning. In her doctoral dissertation, Kellerman (2017) made this clear when she summarised a shorter list of requirements for improving oral proficiency in South Africa which she developed from Walsh's (2002) research. These requirements include a broad vocabulary, being a lifelong learner, the ability to modulate your language to the level of the learners and acquiring knowledge about effective communication strategies for the classroom.

The further benefit of oral proficiency is illustrated in Bleses et al. (2018) argument that teachers play an important role in stimulating language development in young children. Furthermore, they point out that teachers are ultimately also responsible for assessing the learners' language proficiency and providing suitable intervention where barriers to learning are identified. In secondary school, where language plays an important role in the formation of critical thinking skills, this is crucial to the success of the learner. How will the teacher assess the learners properly if they have a poor command of the medium of instruction? How will teachers be sensitive to possible learning barriers and provide suitable intervention strategies?

Good communication does not only encompass being able to use the grammatical part of the language effectively it also includes demonstrating compassion and other similar emotive behaviours when you communicate with children and teenagers (Dannels, et al., 2014). The phenomenon of "perceived caring" and its role in instructional communication was also investigated by Teven and McCroskey (1997) who argue that students constantly watch teacher's communication behaviour as this provides important information about the teacher's "emotional state and attitude toward the students, and familiarity or ease with the lecture format" (Teven & McCroskey, 1997: 3). Tenver and McCroskey's study, conducted at a college, identified three communicative characteristics which illustrate "perceived caring" to the students, namely empathy, understanding and responsiveness. Their study concluded that the presence of these "perceived caring" characteristics in communication in fact had a positive impact on the experiences of the students with their teacher and with the learning content. This has been substantiated in other research (Horan and Afifi, 2014) which illustrates a correlation between positive communication in the classroom and less anxiety among learners.

Apart from promoting learning amongst the learners, proficiency in the medium of instruction is holistically beneficial for the teacher as well, as it improves confidence, lessens performance anxiety, and expands career opportunities (Riordan, 2018). Horan and Afifi (2014: 383) argue that "communication is a fluid and intricate process that is inherently intertwined with psychological, sociological and biological forces". Their study specifically examined the relationship between instructional communication and biological responses such as anxiety and stress. According to their research, a lack of good communication skills in teachers could lead to anxiety as they have less confidence when speaking English in the classroom.

There is also evidence that poor communication skills could ultimately lead to burnout due to the anxiety it creates. Subsequently, this could lead to poor performance, and it could also affect learners' perceptions of their teacher's effectiveness. Since communication is such a complex process that influences various educational and social factors, the evidence suggests that teachers who struggle with instructional communication will find it difficult to stay on topic during lessons or rely predominantly on the textbook, leading to less interaction in the classroom (group work, peer

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discussion) and they will also be less likely to encourage learners to ask questions. They might also struggle to establish good discipline and are more likely to offer negative criticism to learners. Although there exists ample research which focuses on the communication apprehension of learners (Al-Shboul et al., 2013; Javid, 2014; Madonsela, 2015; McCroskey, 1992), similar research on teachers has not been conducted. The research on communication apprehension (Horan & Afifi, 2014; McCroskey & Beatty, 1986;) shows a positive correlation between stress and a decrease in performance as well as the ability to process and remember information.

2.6   Meta-analysis of oral proficiency assessment protocols

The purpose of my research study was to examine the perceptions of lecturers regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach. I also sought to construct a range of criteria which could be used to develop an assessment protocol that could be used as a self-assessment tool to gauge the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers. In the following section, I will attempt to address this by looking at some other measurement criteria researchers have used to evaluate oral proficiency. Although many researchers (de Jager & Evans, 2013; Evans & Cleghorn, 2010a, 2010b; Freeman, 2017; Nieman & Hugo, 2010) agree that the oral proficiency of teachers is an important skill, a sufficient definition of the concept and the requirements relating to the education sector have not been formalised. Subsequently, I have had to look at universal observations of oral proficiency to establish some guidelines for oral proficiency in the South African education domain. In this section, I will provide an overview of each protocol and then illustrate its possible application and challenges in the education sector.

The first place I looked for a definition of oral proficiency was the popular assessment protocols used for the measurement of language proficiency by professionals interested in joining the global market or interested in teaching abroad. For example, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL 2012: 3) identifies an assessment protocol as an "instrument for the evaluation of functional language which assesses proficiency ranging from highly articulate (well-educated) to little or no functional ability". The ACTFL identifies five levels of proficiency in the speaking category, namely Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate and Novice. Each of these categories has additional levels ranging from

low to high. The Distinguished level, which is the highest level of proficiency, has the following requirements:

- Can use language skilfully with accuracy, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- Can reflect on a wide range of global uses and highly abstract concepts.
- Can conduct persuasive and hypothetical discourse.
- Can tailor language to a variety of audiences by adopting speech and register in culturally authentic ways. (2012: 4)

The positive side of the ACTFL is that it measures functional language ability. In other words, it can be used successfully in a company/school/institution to determine whether the participant's language skills are "good enough" to accomplish certain communicative requirements as set out by the company. For example, it can determine whether a teacher is suitably proficient in the medium of instruction to use it to present a lesson successfully. Secondly, the concepts listed above are in line with academic proficiency skills that teachers require such as thinking hypothetically, reflection and modulating language. The problem that I have with the guidelines listed above is that they are quite vague and concepts like "can conduct persuasive and hypothetical discourse" are difficult to measure in a classroom setting. The assessor would also have to be very skilled in these concepts to be able to use the instrument.

In their South African research study, De Jager and Evans (2013) used the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) to evaluate the oral proficiency of 26 final-year student teachers during their teaching practicals. The IELTS is a nine-band scale used to identify the oral proficiency of people who speak English for academic or work purposes. These bands range from non-user to expert user and there are four main criteria in the oral proficiency section, namely: *Fluency and coherence*, *Lexical resource(vocabulary)*, *Grammatical range and accuracy,* and *Pronunciation*. According to de Jager and Evans (2013) ideally, on this scale, a teacher can be considered suitably proficient if he/she measures at level six and above. Level six of the IELTS scale defines a competent user as someone who has "generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings and can use and understand complex

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language, particularly in familiar situations." (IELTS, 2021) De Jager and Evans's study determined that almost 76% of the 26 candidates' oral proficiency skills were far below competent. This assessment protocol is easier to use as it has clear criteria and positioning the participant on a scale makes it easy to determine whether they are proficient or not. However, an individual would have to be trained to use this assessment protocol and would need to be knowledgeable about linguistic concepts like lexical resources and common pragmatic errors that second language speakers make.

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages is widely acclaimed and used frequently by various institutions globally (such as IELTS) to determine whether an individual has suitable proficiency in a language to use it academically or professionally. The CEFR defines a proficient user of English, on a global scale as a person who "can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations" (CEFR, 2021). Alternatively, on the self-assessment scale, the candidate can measure him/herself according to different criteria. The highest criteria for spoken interaction and production lists the following criteria:

> "I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it. I can present a clear, smoothly flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points." *(CEFR, 2021)*

It is clear from the above-mentioned self-report scale that criteria such as fluency, broad vocabulary, knowledge of jargon and grammar are key to achieving proficiency. There are some challenges involved with using self-report assessments which I will discuss in the next section. The reality is that many teachers think they are more proficient in language than they actually are (de Jager & Evans, 2013; Theron & Nel, 2005). Ideally, teachers would have to receive training on communicative competence

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and learn about instructional discourse before they would be able to objectively measure their own oral proficiency. Finally, the CEFR also has qualitative criteria specifically for spoken language:

Table 2.2: CEFR criteria for spoken language

Table 3. *Common Reference Levels: qualitative aspects of spoken language use*

	RANGE	ACCURACY	FLUENCY	INTERACTION	COHERENCE
C2	Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.	Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions).	Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.	Can interact with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal and intonational cues apparently effortlessly. Can interweave his/her contribution into the joint discourse with fully natural turntaking, referencing, allusion making, etc.	Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.
C1	Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say.	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur.	Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.	Can select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface his remarks in order to get or to keep the floor and to relate his/her own contributions skilfully to those of other speakers.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

(Source: https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions)

The table above has a more descriptive approach to identifying the quality of the participant's discourse. It is very similar to the rubrics used by teachers when they assess learners' oral proficiency during a prepared or unprepared speech in South Africa. This should make it easy for a teacher to use to assess the oral proficiency of a colleague or him/herself.

In his research focusing on the level of oral proficiency required by teachers in Korea, Butler (2004) used the Foreign Language Oral Skills Evaluation Matrix (FLOSAM) as a self-rating system to evaluate whether teachers are aware of their language competence. The test is also scaled from level one to six and has mid to high-level ranges. The oral category has four sections: *Oral Fluency, Vocabulary in Speech, Pronunciation and Grammar in Speech.* The highest level in each of these categories advocates for near-native command of the language, which I will be commenting on later. For this section, I will look at level five's criteria which is more descriptive.

Table 2.3 FLOSAM level 5 criteria

Category	Level	Description
Oral Fluency	Level 5	I am generally fluent, but occasionally have minor pauses when I search for the correct manner of expression.
Vocabulary in Speech	Level 5	I have enough vocabulary to participate in more extended discussions on various topics. I also know some connotations and nuances of certain words and expressions.
Pronunciation	Level 5	My pronunciation and intonation are near native-like.
Grammar in Speech	Level 5	I have a good command over a large range of complex grammar and errors are infrequent.
Adapted from Butler's study *What Level of English Proficiency Do Elementary School Teachers Need to Attain to Teach EFL? Case Studies from Korea, Taiwan, and Japan* (2004: 276-277)		

Clearly, these descriptions are simple and easy to use. This assessment protocol is very similar to the IELTS scale used by de Jager and Evans (2013). Since the descriptors are so simple and easy to understand. A teacher would not require much training to be able to use the scale to assess themselves. However, the issue of subjectivity remains.

It is important to note that when we talk about oral proficiency in English it does not mean that all teachers are expected to sound like native speakers of the language or have native-like command of the language. This idea is outdated (Young and Walsh 2010) and even criticised by some researchers such as Riordan (2018) and Freeman (2017). These researchers specifically criticise the convention that it has become a priority in language teaching that the teacher must develop a native competence in communication skills such as fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary to be deemed competent enough to teach the subject. However, in her research, Riordan (2018) challenges the idea that native speakers are superior and suggests that non-native speakers actually might have some advantages over native speakers when teaching a language. These advantages include that a non-native speaker:

- is a good model of a successful learner.

- can teach learning strategies more effectively as they had to learn the language much later in life.

- can provide the learners with more information about the workings of the language.

- can anticipate language difficulties since they might also have struggled with these concepts.

- can be more empathetic to the needs of their learners.

- can benefit from sharing the learners' mother tongue.

- Might be less intimidating to learners as they also only learned the language while at school.

- Can understand the emotional aspects of language learning.

[adapted from *Language for Teaching Purposes* by Riordan (2012: 123)]

Clearly, the idea should not be for teachers to acquire near-native proficiency but rather that researchers and curriculum designers and labour unions to figure out what level of proficiency teachers need in their specific context. There appears to be a consensus in the popular assessment protocols discussed above that coherence, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and grammar are important requirements for oral proficiency. I used the Cambridge English Dictionary (2021) as a reference to define each of these concepts, but I contextualised the definition to a classroom:

Table 2.4: Definitions of concepts

Concept:	Definition
vocabulary	The specific words, terms and expressions known and used by the teacher in a classroom to facilitate comprehension. This vocabulary usually consists of specific words relating to the academic subject, administrative tasks, and classroom management.
pronunciation	How we say words. Most people speak the dialect of standard English with an accent that belongs to the part of the country they

	come from or live in. However, in the classroom teacher might pronounce words a certain way to facilitate comprehension e.g., exaggeration, syllabification.
grammar	(The study or use of) the rules about how words change their form and combine with other words to make sentences. This includes knowledge of syntax, morphology, and phonology and in an English classroom setting, the ability to use and explain these concepts so that learners have a good model of grammatically correct sentences.
fluency	The ability to speak or write in a language with ease, accuracy, and unaffectedness. In a classroom setting, this involves not only the ability to speak or write grammatically correct sentences but also the ability to convey ideas and thoughts effectively and with clarity. It is an important component of effective communication.
coherence	The situation when the parts of something fit together in a natural or reasonable way

What constitutes being proficient in each of these categories in a South African context is part of my study and will require additional research. What is important to note is that some researchers (Hall, 2017; Riordan, 2018; Walsh, 2006b) have included an additional category which is very important when it comes to analysing good communicative practice and that is the skill of metalanguage awareness. Metalanguage refers to the awareness of one's own ability, style, and behaviour when it comes to using a language. In other words, teachers should develop the skills necessary to think about their own use of language in the classroom and to reflect on whether it promotes learning or not. Like other metacognitive skills such as introspection and reflection, this is a difficult skill to acquire and takes practice to master successfully. Other researchers (Greyling, 2012; Kiramba & Smith, 2019; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988; Walsh, 2011) agree that this skill can be mastered by encouraging teachers to record, analyse and assess their own communicative behaviour in the classroom. Alternatively, teachers can also accomplish this insight after some research by observing other teachers' classroom discourse. I will discuss

some applications of this skill in the next section when I examine the uses of self-report scales.

Kellerman (2017) makes an important argument when she suggests that it cannot just be assumed that teachers are proficient enough in the language of instruction to teach effectively. Some researchers (Bleses et al., 2018; Mehrani, 2018) make an important point when they state that assessments are crucial tools that assist in identifying barriers and can also assist with the development of suitable intervention strategies. In this case, they were talking about assessments in school. However, this is supported by other researchers who argue that pre-service teachers should be assessed specifically for oral proficiency and that policy documents should provide clarity or requirements for oral proficiency in English in South African classrooms (Cleghorn & Evans, 2010b). In this section, I will examine a few popular assessment protocols that have been used to examine language proficiency.

One of these protocols used for predicting oral proficiency is the Elicited Imitation Test (EIT) where the participant hears a stimulus and must repeat it. As the test progresses the length of the sentences becomes longer. This test is supposed to show whether a speaker is proficient or not. However, a study conducted by Kim, Tracy-Ventura, and Jung (2016) specifically examined the validity of the EIT as they argue that the test actually examines working memory and not oral proficiency. In other words, you cannot determine whether the participants understand what they are saying. Instead, it just shows how well the participant can remember the sentence. How can we adapt the assessment to also measure whether the participants understand what they are saying? Okura and Lonsdale (2012) included a comprehension task which occurs between hearing stimulus and the onset of repetition which then test the participant's understanding of the passage before they repeat. Although Kim, Tracy-Ventura and Jung criticise the EIT's validity they did commend the test for its ability to measure a person's proficiency independently, which they argue is more objective, than grouping them in categories such as intermediate or advanced. They argue that this type of categorising provides too many variables and is not specific enough to incorporate intervention strategies. Kim and Tracy-Ventura argue that second language acquisition requires more reliable measures and consistent reporting practices (2016: 655).

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Alternatively, there are also tests which measure spontaneous language. A participant will be asked questions that test comprehension about a certain subject and their responses will be evaluated for fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. Mehrani's (2018) research identified some problems with language assessment tools that measure spontaneous language production as it is quite time-consuming and labour-intensive. The process is quite lengthy and intricate as the assessor/researchers would need to record and transcribe a substantial amount of speech in order to acquire enough results that can be analysed, which is also a complex procedure. Mehrani (2018) argues that a successful assessment of language skills should be a test that can be quickly administered and scored. One such test that Mehrani deemed successful was an oral narrative task which can be reliably used to measure overall language development. Basically, this task consists of the participant receiving a topic which they are reasonably familiar with and then they must verbally compile a story about the topic without prior preparation or rehearsal. The IELTS (2016), a British assessment protocol used to measure oral proficiency, also accomplishes this by using other visual prompts. The benefits of this type of assessment are multifaceted as an observer would be able to measure the participant's lexical resource, proficiency, grammar, coherence, and pronunciation.

Different types of self-report scales have also been used to determine communicative competence (Butler, 2004; Flanders 1962; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). They are generally useful for determining how proficient an individual thinks they are in a language. However, these results may not be reliable if you are trying to determine whether an individual has enough proficiency to use the language to teach or work. The reason for this is that an individual could consider themselves more, or less, competent than they really are. McCroskey and McCroskey (1988) argue that an observational assessment protocol would be more reliable in predicting the actual proficiency of the candidate. However, they also added that self-report scales (such as the Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale) may be functional in the sense that it provides the user with insight into his/her communicative behaviours.

The SPCC consists of twelve categories which each reflect four common communication contexts such as "public speaking, talking in a large meeting, talking in a small group, and talking in a dyad" and three common types of receivers--

strangers, acquaintances, and friends. For each of these combinations of context and receiver type, the participants must evaluate their competence on a scale of 0-100. In addition to a global self-perceived communication competence score, the scale permits the generation of a sub-score for each type of communication context and each type of receiver so that the participant can see where their strengths and weaknesses lie (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988).

I have already argued why teachers must have a thorough knowledge of their own communicative behaviours in the classroom as effective instructional communication enhances learning (Behrens & Jablon 2008: 41). Behrens and Jablon (2008: 41) used a successful example of a self-report assessment. They developed a metapragmatic assessment that encourages introspection into an individual's linguistic behaviour by presenting learners and teachers, in a communication programme, with a transcript of their conversation and asking them guided questions. The purpose of this assessment was to determine where their communicative competence and choices undermined their working relationship. The idea behind the test was that teachers and learners develop an understanding of their communicative style and habits and then adjust the way that they communicate.

Behrens and Jablon's (2008) research also focused on a five-step training model that uses both conversation analysis and introspection to enhance communication. The idea behind the assessment and training module is to encourage teachers, who want to gain more insight into their communicative behaviour, to consider:

- How do they start conversations? (getting to the point/directness)
- Observing the backchannel cues of the learners as well as becoming aware of their own backchannel cues.
- How do they manage "turn-taking" in the classroom and whether they allow learners the opportunity to talk?
- How are conversations ended? (Positive? Summative?)
- Introspection and allowing feedback from the learners.

This appears to be a successful assessment protocol as it encourages teachers to develop their metalanguage skills and promotes unidirectional awareness of discourse patterns in the classroom. In other words, both teachers and learners become aware

of how they communicate and the effect that that communication has on learning. In other words, learners also have an opportunity to analyse communicative behaviours and subsequently adjust their own style of communicating.

Research on the assessment of language proficiency in social contexts provided fertile ground to draw on for designing an assessment tool. The 1999 study by Padilla and Sung, evaluated the development of the Stanford Foreign Language Oral Skills Evaluation Matrix (FLOSEM) and found that it was a valid, reliable, and convenient pre- and post-measure of communicative proficiency that foreign language teachers could use to test the oral proficiency of their learners. However, it was mainly used to test oral proficiency in Japanese, Chinese, and Korean as a foreign language but was used by Butler (2004) to evaluate elementary school teachers' perceptions of their own spoken English proficiency when teaching EFL in Taiwan, Japan, and Korea. In the conference paper, that examined how the use of social media can enhance the communicative competency of learners, Wu, Marek, and Huang (2012) developed a promising assessment tool in the form of a rubric. This rubric can be used to assess the communicative competency of candidates regarding their fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and message. There are several other standardised tests available that assess the oral proficiency of speakers who use English as a foreign language such as the Test of Spoken English (TSE) which is used to measure "the ability of non-native speakers of English to communicate orally in a North American English context" (2001:4).

The American Council on The Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2012), Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL, 2023) and Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) also provide guidelines that can be used to assess proficiency. The ACTFL describes five levels of oral proficiency namely Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice. The speaking component of the ACTFL can be used to assess the following speaking components: content, context, accuracy, and discourse types as well as measuring speech that is "either Interpersonal (interactive, two-way communication) or Presentational (one-way, non-interactive)" (2012: 4). However, the study conducted by Beaufait (1986) focused on the reliability and validity of these instruments when used in the United States to test the oral proficiency of learners studying English. He found that the oral

interview assessment protocol is more reliable than both the TSE and the ACTFL. On the other hand, TESOL provides a wider assortment of methods that can be used to comprehensively evaluate an individual's oral proficiency. These include oral interviews, role-playing, presentations, and group discussions. In comparison the TOEIC assesses a speaker's ability to use English in a real-life work environment, specifically the four language competencies of listening, reading, speaking, and writing (Im & Chang, 2019). The listening and reading sections are paper-and-pencil-tests while the speaking and writing section is computer-based. The purpose of the TOEIC Speaking test is to evaluate three assertions, which are: (1) the ability of test-takers to generate speech that can be easily understood by native English speakers and proficient non-native English speakers, (2) their ability to produce suitable language for everyday social interactions, and (3) their ability to compose coherent and relevant discourse suitable for professional settings (Im & Chang, 2019: 317).

The most relevant assessment tool I found in my research is the Classroom Proficiency rubric that Kellerman (2017) designed for her dissertation (Addendum D) as it has been applied successfully in a South African setting to test the Classroom English proficiency of isiZulu-speaking pre-service Intermediate Phase teachers' and played a significant part in my research. Kellerman's (2017) Classroom English Proficiency Rubric employs a five-point scale to gauge proficiency, ranging from level 1, indicating an absence of proficiency, to level 5, representing an optimal proficiency level for effective teaching facilitation (2017: 81). This rubric encompasses eight distinct criteria: Vocabulary, Grammatical Accuracy, Pronunciation, Language Sophistication demonstrated through learner engagement, Language Use illustrated through teaching techniques, Expression of Subject Content Knowledge, utilization of code-switching, and Support for learners' English development. Kellerman's primary objective in developing this rubric was to evaluate the practical application of language within a classroom setting. Moreover, it aimed to serve as a potential tool for pinpointing the developmental requirements of both pre-service and in-service teachers (2017: 81). This purpose closely aligned with the intended utility of my own assessment protocol. Although there are numerous other assessment scales available, I wished to create an appropriate self-assessment protocol that could be used to establish the oral language proficiency of teachers, in a South African context. I explain this further in Chapter 4.

Another assessment protocol which I was interested in was Flanders' Interaction Analysis system. Flanders defines interactional analysis as "a system for observing and coding the verbal interchange between a teacher and his pupils." (1966: 1) It assumes that the exchanges in the classroom between teacher and learner take place mostly through speaking. The exchanges between teacher and learner occur as a series of "verbal events" (1966: 1) which can be identified, coded, and analysed. Ideally, this can be completed by video or audio taping a lesson or series of lessons, transcribing these interchanges, labelling, and coding each interaction and then analysing the data, like a researcher would do when they analyse the data from an interview. The idea is that a trained observer can analyse these transactions and reach conclusions about the teacher's communicative behaviour or that the teacher can be trained to assess their own discourse. This might be more beneficial since they will be able to see their communicative style and behaviour first-hand, which might encourage them to develop metalanguage skills and invest in the improvement of their discourse patterns. As I have mentioned previously traditional self-report protocols are flawed as they are not as objective. Flanders (1966) addresses this issue by suggesting that the teacher must be trained in the decoding and analysis procedure. He successfully used this protocol in his In-Service Training Project (1962) where 55 teachers participated in analysing their own communicative behaviour. Teachers received observational training and were encouraged to use their training to observe other teachers' lessons and look for patterns in communicative behaviours. These teachers also received training on crucial communicative concepts and learned tools and skills to improve their own communication style in the classroom.

Flanders considered this exercise successful as he states that "a schoolwide spirit of inquiry and experimentation was starting to develop" (1962:315), meaning that most of the teachers who took part in this programme became aware of their discourse patterns and became inquisitive and interested in learning more about instructional discourse. This is significant as in his research Flanders also illustrates some important points to consider about training teachers and improving their performance. He acknowledged that some challenges exist when trying to train teachers. Firstly, teachers are not always keen on changing their teaching or communication style. The reason for this is usually that teachers are largely unaware of their own communicative

behaviour in the classroom. Furthermore, their everyday experiences are not enough to educate them on these issues, and they would have to actively invest time towards educating themselves and improving their skills. One of the main reasons for this, according to Flanders (1962), is that schools do not place sufficient value on in-service training as their focus is mainly on completing the curriculum and just "getting through the year". There is simply just not enough time. Ousseini (2019) notes that this is a pervasive phenomenon in African countries and that these countries also do not invest enough research in teacher education and training.

2.7   Conclusion

It is commonly acknowledged that the quality of education considerably depends on the quality of teachers and teacher education.

(Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006)

My literature review identified significant gaps in the research surrounding oral proficiency in the education sector. One of the most noteworthy gaps is the research on the assessment of the oral proficiency of South African teachers. This is disturbing as South African learners struggle with significant barriers to learning, many of which can be attributed to language barriers (Nel et al., 2016). Could the elephant in the room be that these academic issues can be attributed to the teacher's oral proficiency? This is understandable as teachers already must take responsibility for so much in the education sector. However, if these issues are not explored, how can they be changed or improved upon? Although research on communication in the classroom that specifically focuses on the communicative competence of teachers and how it affects learning is sparse (Nussbaum & Friedrich, 2005), research does exist on the behaviour and perceptions of teachers and learners and this research has successfully been used to develop and implement intervention strategies (de Jager & Evans, 2013; Evans & Cleghorn 2010; Kellerman, 2017; Theron & Nel, 2005; Young & Walsh, 2010).

Finally, my research has also illustrated that the research that has been conducted on oral proficiency mainly focuses on primary schools and the perspectives of secondary school and higher education professionals have been neglected. My research will specifically look at the perspective of lecturers on the oral proficiency of pre-service

teachers in South Africa who use English as a medium of instruction. My research revealed a lack of involvement from lecturers on this subject, despite their responsibility in educating future teachers. Hence, I chose to take this viewpoint. This chapter has provided some context for my research by looking at an overview of the literature which focuses on Classroom English, Instructional Discourse and the various assessment protocols which have been developed to assess oral proficiency in the medium of instruction. In my next chapter, I provided more information about how I will apply some of these assessment strategies to develop a self-assessment protocol that could gauge the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers. The following chapter outlines the research process, including the data collection and analysis strategies used to address my research questions. I also outline the ethical considerations I had to make, the anticipated constraints and the criteria I used to establish the quality of my research.

3. Chapter 3: Design and methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the research design and methodology that I used to construct and analyse the data. In the previous chapter, I discussed the theoretical and conceptual framework as part of the literature review. This chapter begins with a description of my research paradigm of constructivism that forms the theoretical lens of my study. This chapter also looks at the qualitative method used in the construction of the data and the case study design of the study. I also illustrated how each data construction technique is used to answer my two research questions. This is followed by the methodology, focusing on the virtual research site, the participants and sampling techniques used, and how the data were prepared, generated, and analysed.

3.2 Research paradigm

Epistemology relates to the way that human beings acquire knowledge and create meaning (Yilmaz, 2013: 315). In other words, a paradigm would be the fundamental beliefs that underpin a person's perceptions of reality. For this qualitative case study, I adopted a constructivist approach based on interpretivism, assuming that individuals construct their reality through interactions with the environment (Creswell, 2014: 9) and "through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences" (Adom, Yeboah, & Ankrah, 2016: 2). As a teacher I am a supporter of this worldview as I have experienced it in practice. People are not empty vessels meant to be filled. Children cannot learn by being spoon-fed knowledge by a teacher. Instead, people actively construct meaning through interaction with other people and their surroundings. According to social constructivists, meaning is multifaceted, and this means that a researcher will rather take a comprehensive look at the complexity of meaning as opposed to a search for definitive rules and conclusions.

Constructivism provides a suitable philosophical stance for research in education as it explores the way that teachers and learners construct meaning by interacting with their environment and each other. The constructivist paradigm, which informs my qualitative case study helped me to explore the perceptions of lecturers regarding the oral

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proficiency of pre-service teachers, who use English to teach. This was accomplished by using the expertise and knowledge of lecturers in the education field to guide the development of a self-assessment protocol which can effectively measure the oral language proficiency of South African teachers. The use of the constructivism paradigm was suitable for this study as a key assumption of this worldview is that "knowledge is gained, or at least filtered, through social constructions such as language, consciousness, *shared meanings*, *documents,* and other artefacts" (Henning, 2004: 21).

This paradigm is advantageous as it ensured that I remain aware of the influence of culture, environment, and beliefs on how individuals interpret and experience the world. (Mogashoa, 2014: 52) as people do not develop in isolation and are affected by their context. This is particularly important in South Africa where concepts like language, culture, community, tradition, and education are intertwined and are often more complex than they appear. Furthermore, South Africa's volatile history which was influenced by language and education policies provides a complex and rich context from which individual meaning is created.

Some researchers argue that constructivism is not as accurate as quantitative research paradigms (such as pragmatism) as it is difficult to remain objective (Henning, 2004) and therefore the data cannot be transferred to the public. (Mogashoa, 2014:56) However, the purpose of my research was not to make predictive generalisations but rather to explore a complex issue in a South African context from the perspective of South African lecturers. Furthermore, a constructivist paradigm emphasises the value of multiple perspectives in a setting and suitably also provides a place for my experiences as a teacher in South Africa. However, the challenge of objectivity and possible bias can be addressed by using a method called triangulation. This was accomplished by involving numerous participants from a variety of diverse settings in the study. This was discussed more comprehensively in the quality criteria section of my dissertation.
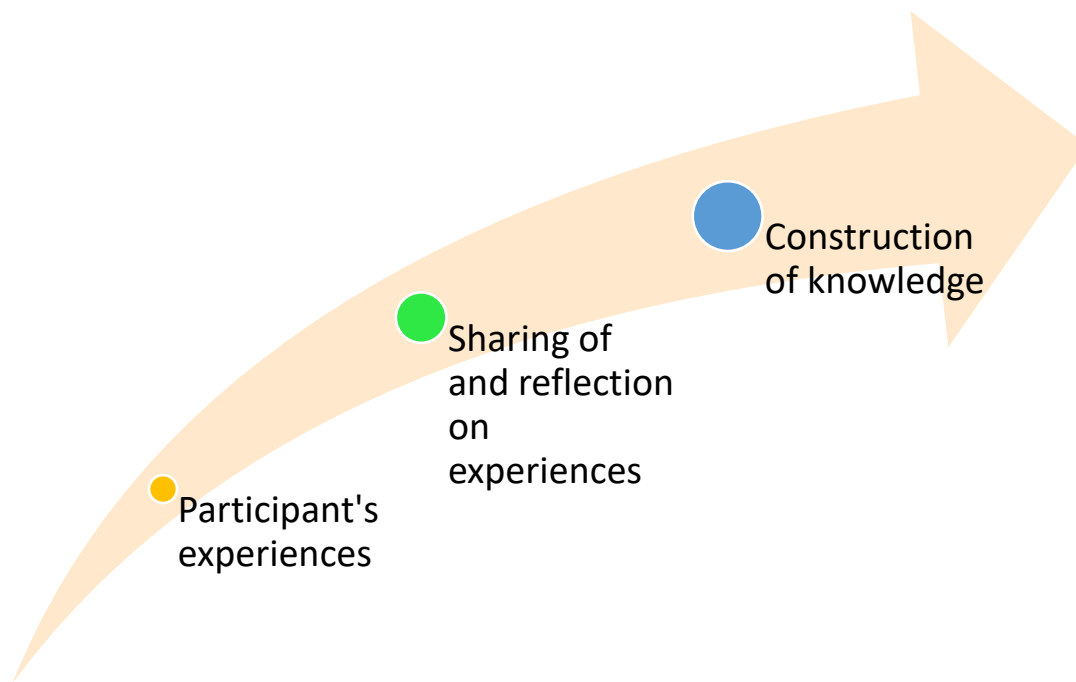
Figure 3.1 A visual interpretation of the research paradigm

3.3   Research design

A research design builds on the philosophical assumptions of the researcher and is the plan that a researcher uses to choose the participants, the data-construction techniques and decides how the data will be analysed (Posthuma, 2011:62). In order to examine lecturers' perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers, who teach in using English, I used a qualitative case study research design. The case study research design is a design of inquiry that provides an in-depth and descriptive study of an event, problem, place, phenomenon, or person within a bounded system (such as time or place) based on extensive data collection techniques, such as document analysis, interviews, and surveys (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 370).

However, as observation was not possible in the pandemic climate of South Africa, I decided to use a descriptive case study research design which focuses on several lecturers' perspectives regarding the oral language proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach. I accomplished this by using a data collection technique characteristic of a case study design, in the form of online interviews with ten lecturers who teach pre-service teachers. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of my participants' perceptions and experiences

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concerning the language proficiency of South African pre-service teachers. This was linked with my constructivist paradigm which was built upon the assumption that meaning is constructed through shared experiences.

One of the main benefits of using a qualitative case study research design in educational research is that it provides an in-depth and holistic look at complex educational phenomena as they "unfold in practice" (Krusenvik, 2016: 5) and these findings can then be used to inform practice, change policies, and develop interventions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). However, this type of inquiry can also become very complex and lengthy as I would have to transcribe and analyse ten online interviews, search for common themes and show how the data relate to or converge with each other. I overcame this obstacle by hiring an expert to transcribe some of my interviews.

3.4   Purpose and questions

The purpose of my research was two-pronged. Firstly, I aimed to determine the perceived oral proficiency of pre-service teachers, who use English as a medium of instruction, to teach. Secondly, I also used the data collected from this study with my research in the literature review to develop a self-assessment protocol which could be used by pre-service teachers, who use English as a medium of instruction, to gauge their oral proficiency. Additionally, I hope that in the future my study can be used to develop guidelines that stakeholders can use to ensure that teachers acquire an adequate level of proficiency to teach effectively in English in the South African education climate.

To address this purpose, I developed a primary and secondary research question. The primary research question needed to be answered first in order to address the secondary research question. The data collected from the transcribed recordings of interviews conducted with ten lecturers, who present education modules, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) or language methodology as a subject at a South African university or college, contributed to answering these questions.

The primary research question to be answered was:

- How do teacher educators perceive the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach?

My semi-structured interview had specific questions related to the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers. I intended to investigate the sentiments of the participants concerning this matter within the context of South Africa and to ascertain their viewpoints regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers. The analysis of these data contributed to answering my primary research question.

The secondary research question shifted the focus to the assessment of oral proficiency. This was also accomplished by asking the lecturers a series of predetermined questions which focused on the assessment of oral proficiency.

The secondary question is:
- What criteria ought to be considered as key when assessing the oral proficiency of South African teachers who use English as a medium of instruction?

The analysis of the participants' responses to these questions uncovered multiple patterns which were developed into criteria for the self-assessment protocol which can be used to gauge the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers.

In the next section, I discuss the research methodology and data construction process that I used.

3.5   Research methodology and data construction

This case study had a two-pronged qualitative data-generation process that encouraged a descriptive exploration of complex themes gathered from the participant's experiences. The qualitative methodological approach is an effective research strategy as it provides a holistic and in-depth view of current perspectives that lecturers have regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English as a medium of instruction. However, the qualitative approach also has some disadvantages as it is not a statistical/numerical form of data, it might be difficult to replicate, and this influences the reliability of the findings. Furthermore, the large quantity of data can be difficult to manage, and the analysis thereof can be time-

consuming. This challenge can be overcome by planning properly, designing a realistic research timeline, keeping data organised properly and keeping an audit trail of the data construction and analysis process. Finally, personal bias is also a challenge in qualitative research since can be subjective and susceptible to personal bias. This will be discussed in the quality criteria section of this dissertation.

The qualitative data for this case study firstly comprises the analysis of transcriptions of online interviews which I conducted with ten teacher educators. For the purpose of clarity, I will call them lecturers. These data were used to establish the perceptions of these lecturers regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach. The participants were invited to join the research project via an online advert and were requested to provide their perceptions and experiences regarding the oral proficiency currently used by pre-service teachers. These data could provide a comprehensive view of the level of oral proficiency that South African teachers require to teach effectively in a multilingual setting. As these lecturers have extensive knowledge of and experience working with pre-service teachers, I believed that their answers to these semi-structured interview questions would provide valuable insight that can be used to develop suitable amendments to the South African policy documents relating to teacher efficacy.

This information was used in conjunction with the research conducted in my literature review to suggest criteria for a self-assessment protocol which can be used to gauge the oral proficiency of South African teachers. A comprehensive literature review was conducted to gather information related to assessing oral proficiency in general. The literature review served as a source of data generation, where existing studies and findings in the field were analysed and synthesised to inform the current research. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the structure and criteria of assessment protocols used to gauge oral proficiency and also provided the basis for the data analysis and interpretation.

3.6 Virtual research sites

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, I had to adjust my initial plans as access to schools and universities was limited. Subsequently, for the most part, data for this study were collected using virtual settings such as Google Forms, WhatsApp, and Zoom. The primary data were collected via virtual interviews conducted with ten lecturers. Subsequently, it was not necessary for me as the researcher to physically visit schools or universities. The participants were recruited via a research invitation posted on the website of the SAALT explaining the study and requesting interested lecturers to respond. Their positive response indicated voluntary consent to critique an assessment protocol and participate in a virtual interview. Additional participants were contacted via email and consent was acquired using Google Forms.

3.7 Participant profile and sampling

The preliminary data for this study was constructed from the transcriptions of interviews which I conducted with ten experienced lecturers. The participants from this existing data were selected using convenience and snowball sampling. Whoever responded positively to the research notice and met the selection criteria would be considered; I asked these participants to provide me with contact details of any other participants who would be interested to participate. These participants used English as a medium of instruction but were not necessarily native speakers of the language. These participants included ten lecturers who present education, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) or language methodology as a subject at a South African university or college. It was important to consider that the level of expertise, teaching experience and home language of these participants might have an impact on their knowledge and perceptions about the oral proficiency of South African teachers.

A minimum of eight adult participants was envisaged but I eventually interviewed ten. Selection criteria included being involved in teacher preparation at a South African institution of higher learning for at least three years. Having some knowledge of assessing oral proficiency was also a recommendation. Their age, ethnicity and gender were irrelevant as well as the institution at which they work. Some biographical information about the participants is provided on the following page in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Range of experience of participants and modules taught.

Participant	Module/Course	Experience
A0001	Teaching of English Language Acquisition Teaching of a FAL Teaching of text and text analysis	4 years
A0002	Workplace Integrated Learning/ teaching practice	20 years
A0003	PGCE life science education Science and technology education Work integrated learning. Supervise Master and PhD students.	18 years
A0004	English FAL Teaching	10 years
A0005	Literacies in Education, English Methodology	7 years
A0006	Mathematics, Mathematics teaching	19 years
A0007	English Language and Literature	16 Years
A0008	Literacies in Education	4 years
A0009	English methodology, Professional Studies, Education, Multiliteracies in Education	12 years
A0010	Education, Professional Studies	13 years

3.8   Data generation tools

This case study had a two-pronged qualitative data-generation process. New data were generated through a virtual structured interview of roughly 60 minutes during which I intended to explore the perceptions of lecturers regarding the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers and the possible efficacy of implementing the self-assessment protocol I planned to develop. I provided the participants with a summary of what my research would entail before I conducted the interviews. The online interviews were conducted in English on a virtual platform called Zoom at a time most convenient to the participant and only the audio was recorded.

For this purpose, I composed a semi-structured interview schedule to guide my conversation with my participants (Addendum A). The questions for my interview

schedule were formulated by drawing from both the information I collected during my literature review and a careful examination of data-collection instruments utilised by researchers with similar research goals. Preparing my questions in advance provided an outline of the topics and questions to be covered and ensured consistency and comparability between different interviews. The interview schedule had two sections: Section A contained questions about the lecturers' biographical detail and some personal experiences. Section B contained twenty questions relating to their observations, opinions, and experiences of the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers and assessment protocols used to measure oral proficiency. As this was a semi-structured interview schedule, I followed up with questions that were not scripted whenever the participants said something that piqued my interest.

The data for the secondary research question were derived from a literature review of existing research on oral proficiency assessment protocols. Part of my literature review consisted of comparing various assessment protocols used globally to assess proficiency in English. . These protocols include the:

- Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' speaking assessment (ACTFL)
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS)
- Foreign Language Oral Skills Evaluation Matrix (FLOSAM)
- Elicited Imitation Test (EIT)
- Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC)
- Test of Spoken English (TSE)
- Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC)
- Flanders' Interaction Analysis system
- Kellerman's (2017) Classroom English Proficiency Rubric

This research process involved comparing the design, criteria, applications, benefits, and challenges of each assessment protocol. From this research, preliminary criteria were identified which I used to create a self-assessment protocol that South African teachers who use English as a medium of instruction could use to gauge their oral proficiency.

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Table 3.2 Data construction techniques

The following table justifies my choice of data construction techniques:

	Benefits	Challenges	Documentation
Semi-structured interview	• This form of data collecting can measure and produce detailed accounts of feelings, attitudes, and beliefs. • Questions can be prepared in advance. • Can produce data which can be compared to other data. • Follow-up questions can be asked which prevents misinterpretation.	• The processing of this type of data may be time-consuming. • Accessing participants was difficult as some were reluctant to participate and COVID protocols made it difficult to meet in person. • Participants may provide answers that they think are more "appropriate". • Interviewers may unintentionally influence participants' responses. • Analysing interview data can be complex. • Conducting interviews can raise ethical concerns, such as ensuring participants' privacy and obtaining informed consent.	• Audio recordings from Zoom. • Transcribed data will be stored on a Google Drive and the UP-data repository.
Meta-analysis	• Often contains a wealth of information that can provide a detailed understanding of a topic. • Non-intrusive data collection method • Time efficient • Cost-effective method for collecting data. • Easily accessed by other researchers, which increases the reproducibility of research findings	• Finding and accessing the relevant documents can be challenging. • The authenticity and reliability of documents can be difficult to determine. • Researchers may have different interpretations of the same document, which can result in inconsistent findings and conclusions. • Time-consuming analysis. • Meta-analysis may not provide a complete picture of a topic.	• Various assessment protocols used to assess oral proficiency
[Source: adapted from McMillan, J. and Schumacher, S. (2014). *Research in Education: Evidence-Based Inquiry.* (7th Edition), pp. 376-386. London: Pearson.]			

3.9   Data analysis

The data analysis of this study was conducted from an inductive qualitative approach. In other words, after the interviews had been transcribed, I manually coded, and categorised the data to provide information about the perceptions that lecturers had of the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach. The purpose of adopting this approach was to allow the data to inform the analysis and interpretation, aiming to gain a comprehensive understanding of the insights provided by the lecturers. Instead of conducting hypothesis testing, the emphasis of this approach was on facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the data to uncover valuable perspectives and experiences. The goal was to uncover the inherent insights revealed in the data and provide a deeper understanding, without imposing preconceived notions or biases. The exploratory process of coding and categorisation helped me to develop more meaningful insights about the data (McMillan, et al., 2014).

The first step in data analysis is to organise and prepare the data for analysis. For the analysis of this data, I used qualitative discourse analysis which is imbedded in constructivism as it relies on the premise "that there are multiple meanings and that the clues to those meanings need to be found in the discourse, the rule-governed language behaviour" (Henning, 2004: 117). The data for this study was constructed from the close analysis of transcripts made of the interviews I conducted with ten lecturers from South African higher education institutions. These participants used English as a medium of instruction but were not necessarily native speakers of the language.

The initial process of analysing the data consisted of first printing out all of the transcriptions and performing multiple close readings of the text to get a sense of the data. While analysing the text, I made annotations in the margins of the printed transcription using a pencil, to get an initial impression of the emerging units of meaning. These units of meaning that were significant to my research were highlighted in different colours and then different descriptive labels were attributed to these phrases/sentences. Examples of these labels were the definition of oral proficiency, communication requirements, errors etc. After reading each transcription, I wrote a short summary of my observations. This form of data analysis is also constructed from

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a constructivist paradigm and is inductive as the researcher is involved in the meaning-making process (Henning, 2004; McMillan, et al., 2014).

For the second part of my data construction, I created a table on Word and pasted each participant's response under the copied question. I again performed a close reading of the text and looked for keywords, commonalities, and outliers/discrepancies in the perceptions that the participants expressed using qualitative content analysis (open coding). I labelled them with codes and organised them according to similar categories by grouping similar codes and making connections where applicable. I analysed the patterns and used the data to identify themes illustrating lecturers' views on the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers and their opinions on the assessment protocol. These themes were also created and interpreted using the theoretical framework. I repeated this process until I reached a point of data saturation. I discuss my findings in the next chapter.

Question: would you say your students are confident when they use English to teach their subject?			
Participant	**Answer**	**Label**	**Codes**
A0001	Well no. I think not all of them. <mark>There are definitely students who are comfortable and who are competent but a great number of them do find it a challenge to teach in English</mark>. But it also differs. Our students who are of our higher levels and who are in the school set up and who are actually working in the school full time, especially those of our learners placed at our English schools are much more confident. So obviously their exposure and the amount of teaching they have done in English influences that and so it varies according to the amount of experience that they have. Yes, that was the next question I wanted to ask you is why do you think some of them are not confident when they speak English in the classroom? It definitely has to do with how much they actually practice using the language and how much exposure they have to it. Because teaching in English is different to teaching English. When you are teaching English, you have to use subject specific vocabulary, you have to use vocabulary that's relating to the curriculum and school… and practices that we have at school. So you will often find that they do make errors in those types of things where they try and translate it into… from Afrikaans. R Yes, I think that's some of the errors that I make as well when I teach English at school. I Yeah.	Mixed level of confidence. Experience Exposure to English affects confidence English subject knowledge Subject Jargon Code switching	1. Level of confidence 2. Factors affecting confidence in English teaching

Figure 3.2: Example of coding process done on one participant's response.

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3.10   Ethical clearance

As per the guidelines of the ethics committee of the University of Pretoria, consent and approval had to be obtained from several people and places before the data collection procedure could begin. The first place I had to obtain clearance was from the ethics committee of the University of Pretoria's education faculty as I was working with human participants. This is particularly important as my focus was language which is a sensitive and controversial topic in South Africa since it is connected to culture and identity. Additionally, language also played a significant role in the country's history of oppression and inequality and often serves as a vehicle of power (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2014:225). This means that I had to be sensitive to complex social issues relating to language, such as culture, identity and protecting participants from emotional harm. This ethical clearance for this study was granted and is attached at the beginning of this document (**EDU042/20**).

The participants consented to voluntary participation, which means that they were not coerced or manipulated to participate. Participants chose to respond to an invitation published on the SAALT website; therefore. I then sent emails to interested participants, which included information concerning the aim of my research project and their role which they would have as participants which is mainly providing information on their experiences and perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers that they teach. I also informed them that they could withdraw at any time.

Since they were adult participants and well-educated, I required that they sign an informed consent letter which I redesigned as a Google Form so that my participants could complete it virtually. An example of this document is attached as addendum B. I also included my contact details and those of my supervisor on the informed consent letter so that participants could contact us if they had any questions. I did not need to obtain permission from schools or the GDE. Furthermore, I protected the participants' confidentiality and privacy by storing the collected data on a password-protected Google Drive account for the duration of the study and then the University of Pretoria's data repository for 15 years. I also used numerical identifiers when referring to participants to protect their anonymity such as A0001. I needed to conduct online

interviews and thus required permission to record these interviews so that I could listen to them later, transcribe and analyse the data. These online interviews did not need to include video as audio recordings sufficed. To protect the participants' anonymity and confidentiality I also signed a confidentiality clause in the personal declaration of responsibility. The transcriber also signed a confidentiality agreement.

My study aimed to improve the assessment protocols used by some education faculties in South Africa for pre-service teachers and to explore the perceptions that lecturers have regarding the speaking practices of pre-service teachers. In the long run, this will be beneficial to the improvement of South African education. There was no inherent risk associated with this study as my interview questions are structured in such a way that they are not intrusive, offensive, or distorted by prejudice. They were also free of material error and not aimed at the interview participant personally. However, I remained sensitive as English language proficiency is a sensitive issue since, only 9,6% of South Africans claim English as their home language (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Given that the lecturers were required to be subject specialists in English methodology, it was presumed that they possessed a sufficient level of English proficiency, which would enable them to feel confident and at ease during the interview process, without any concerns about their own oral language skills. The analysis of suggested criteria for the assessment protocol was conducted by lecturers based on their knowledge and experiences the lecturer had from school visits. I provided suitable recognition for these contributions in the form of emails, and I acknowledged and thanked them for their contributions in this document. They were not compensated for their participation in any way.

3.11   Quality criteria

It is important that the trustworthiness and credibility of the research should be maintained.

The trustworthiness of the study was maintained by remaining aware of potential personal bias and attempting to remain neutral and objective. I acknowledged my background as an English language teacher, which could introduce bias into the research process. To mitigate this, I remained vigilant about my potential biases

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throughout the study. By recognising my predispositions and striving for neutrality and objectivity, I aimed to enhance the credibility of the research. To minimize the influence of bias, I engaged in peer debriefing. My supervisor reviewed the collected data. This process, recommended by Creswell (2014), helps ensure the research's dependability by confirming that the data were free from material errors and bias. Trustworthiness can also be promoted by using triangulation, which means that data is collected from multiple participants from diverse settings and by using more than one data-construction instrument. This will improve the trustworthiness of the data as the researcher will have a better understanding of the different variables which contribute to behaviour, feelings, and experiences (McMillan & Schumacher 2014: 354). The transcriptions were also available for review if participants wished to view them to ensure that the data were trustworthy. To enhance the credibility of my study, I openly acknowledged any discrepancies or areas of concern in the data. Recognising that "real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce" (Creswell, 2014), I addressed these variations transparently, contributing to the confirmability of the research. I engaged deeply with the data, spending an extended amount of time immersed in the information. This strategy minimises the potential influence of preconceived notions or biases during the analysis process, thus contributing to the study's confirmability Furthermore, I carefully documented all of my findings and made notes by hand in a research diary which would lend further credibility to my findings should anyone wish to view these notes. An audit trail was meticulously maintained throughout the research process. This detailed record includes the generation of data, transcription, coding, and findings. It was cross-referenced with references from the existing literature. This step contributes to the confirmability of the study by allowing for transparency and scrutiny of the research process.

3.12   Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the research paradigm, design and methodology used in this study as well as the virtual research sites, selection of participants, data construction and analysis. In the next chapter, I will focus on the data and the analysis thereof. I will first discuss how the data will be presented, starting with the criteria which I identified from the analysis of the recorded lessons. Thereafter I will discuss the data I collected from the interviews which focused on the perceptions of lecturers regarding

the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers who use English to teach. I will discuss the findings relating to the oral proficiency of teachers. Lastly, I will delve into the data that specifically examines the lecturers' viewpoints on the criteria for the self-designed oral proficiency assessment protocol, ultimately synthesising and consolidating my findings.

4. Chapter 4: Data presentation and discussion

4.1 Introduction

"Crucially, in a classroom, it is through language in interaction that we access new knowledge, acquire, and develop new skills, identify problems of understanding, deal with 'breakdowns' in the communication, establish and maintain relationships and so on. Language, quite simply, lies at the heart of everything." (Walsh, 2011)

As indicated by Walsh teachers must possess the crucial skill of using language pre-emptively and innovatively to communicate effectively in the classroom. In the previous chapter, I described the research design and methodology which I used to construct my data and provided justification for choosing my intended participants. I also explained why I would have to conduct my research online as a result of the COVID pandemic. In this chapter, I present and then interpret the data which I collected through in-depth interviews with ten experienced teacher educators. For the sake of this discussion, I call them lecturers and refer to them as participants. The findings of my data will offer a rich description of the perceptions that the participants had, regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers. In the first section of this chapter, I present my data, and in the second section, I discuss my findings. These two sections will illustrate how the data addresses my two research questions. Firstly, how the lecturers perceive the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach and secondly, the criteria which ought to be considered key when assessing the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers. In the final section of this chapter, I will synthesise the data and present a self-assessment protocol that I designed using some of the criteria for the assessment of oral proficiency as suggested by the participants.

4.2 Presentation of data

I organised the data by first discussing the participants' descriptions of oral proficiency then I focused on further themes that emerged from my data relating to their perceptions of the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach.

In the final part of this section, I first unpacked the participants' perceptions regarding the assessment of oral proficiency and then present the participants' perceptions of suitable criteria for such an assessment protocol. The quotes I provided are lifted verbatim from the transcriptions, but I edited some of the grammatical errors. During my literature study, specifically, the work done by Evans and Cleghorn (2010a & 2012) and Kellerman (2017), I came across themes relating to my research which I then used to develop my interview questions. I was pleased to discover that the responses to these questions revealed a convergence of common themes. It was gratifying to witness how various perspectives converged and intersected, creating a shared ground of understanding. However, I also received feedback that I did not expect. In this section, I presented the lecturers' perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers. I wanted to construct a clear picture of some of the issues the education domain faces. I aimed to provide valuable insights and perspectives from experts in the field which serves to enhance the overall understanding of the topic and offers a comprehensive view of the pre-service teachers' oral proficiency. This would provide a strong foundation from which the data could be used to construct a suitable assessment protocol as an outcome of this study as well as make recommendations for future research.

4.2.1 The nature of oral proficiency

In my research, I aimed to delve into lecturers' perspectives on the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who employ English as their medium of instruction. To accomplish this, I designed questions 1-18 in section B of my interview schedule, specifically targeting this inquiry. Prior to delving into the lecturers' viewpoints regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers, it was essential for me to initially examine their comprehension and interpretation of the concept of oral proficiency.

4.2.1.1   The importance of pre-service teachers' oral proficiency

In order to form an understanding of the students that the participants teach I first asked them what the language distribution of their students was. From their responses, it is evident that the spoken language distribution among the students is diverse, with a mix of Afrikaans, English, and various other African languages such as isiZulu, isiXhosa, Setswana, and Sepedi featuring prominently. While the percentage

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breakdowns may vary across different contexts and classes, English seemed to be commonly used as a medium of instruction, even among students whose home language was not English. I next asked the participants how important they thought it was to be proficient in English as a South African teacher. Seven of the ten participants argued that it is very important for South African teachers to be proficient in English when it is used as the medium of instruction.

> *"Well I think it's **extremely important** to be proficient in a communicative sense." (A0001)*

> *"So it is **incredibly important** to not just have a basic command of the language but to have a nuanced understanding of not just academic language but fairly common general language." (A0003)*

> *"Oh it's extremely, it's **extremely important**. I mean language goes across the curriculum. So I think it's probably one of the most important skills that we probably can teach them or prepare them for. But usually at University level, it's almost too late." (A0005)*

> *"I think it's **absolutely vital**." (A0006)*

> *"Basically I would say it's **very important**, meaning is that English is a world recognised language." (A0008)*

> *"I think it's **very important**, I think even if you teach in an Afrikaans school... classrooms are multicultural, multilinguistic spaces" (A0009)*

> *"I think it is actually **really important**, just for the sake of it's the one language that we are using to connect." (A0010)*

It is clear from the participants' responses that most of them felt that oral proficiency is an important skill. The participants provided the following reasons as to why the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers is important:

- It allows for effective communication in the classroom.
- It is crucial for understanding academic and general language nuances.
- It is important due to the diversity of languages in South Africa so that we may communicate and connect effectively in one language.
- It is important to establish cross-curricular learning.

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- It provides connection and common ground in a multicultural context.
- It is a language that provides access to global economies.

One participant felt that due to the multilingual nature of our country, the oral proficiency of teachers who use English is not important as long as the teacher can communicate the disciplinary knowledge.

> *"No, **it's not important**. It's not. We are not using native like language at the moment, but we are communicating. What is important is that learners are able, that teachers are able to communicate, communicate their disciplinary knowledge so meaningfully that the learners are able to engage in the content." (A0007)*

4.2.1.2   Characteristics of oral proficiency

I sought additional information from the participants by asking several questions targeted at their perceptions of oral proficiency, aiming to gain insights that would help paint a comprehensive picture of its defining attributes. Based on their responses, I identified six major attributes that contribute to the portrait of a teacher who possesses oral proficiency in English. Three of these themes align with the CAF (Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency) triad, which are commonly associated with oral proficiency. Housen and Kuiken argue that the CAF triad has been "used both as performance descriptors for the oral and written assessment of language learners as well as indicators of learners' proficiency underlying their performance; they have also been used for measuring progress in language learning." (2009: 1). Additionally, I discovered two other themes that, although not directly related to oral proficiency, were deemed highly important by the participants when discussing teacher communication. These themes are:

- Perspectives on native proficiency
- Oral proficiency beyond accent

By examining all these themes, I obtained a more comprehensive understanding regarding the perspective that the lecturers had regarding the qualities that constitute a pre-service teacher who has oral proficiency when using English to teach.

Attribute 1: Complexity

Four participants recognised the importance of complexity as a key component of oral proficiency. Complexity refers to the diversity, richness, and sophistication of a person's second language use. It includes the use of complex grammatical structures, a wide sophisticated vocabulary range, and the ability to express and elaborate on ideas in a nuanced and elaborate manner (Housen & Kuiken, 2009; Michel, 2017). Complexity is often associated with higher levels of language proficiency.

Participant A0001 stated, *"Using and choosing the right words... as long as the message is clear, and you have chosen the right vocabulary I would consider you to be orally competent."* This response suggests that selecting appropriate words and vocabulary is a crucial aspect of oral proficiency, indicating a level of complexity in language use. This was supported by participant A0003 who mentioned the challenges in science education, stating, *"In the sciences, students often lack both basic communication skills and appropriate terminology. This imprecision in expressing themselves compounds the problem."* Participant A0002 and A0006 also highlighted the significance of subject-specific vocabulary in teaching science and mathematics, stating,

> *"If you cannot communicate properly in that language of instruction you miss a lot of nuances, you miss a lot of information, you start picking up problems with… not just communication but with information. You know if I think about some of the common problems that students have, they will for example be confused between "consist of" and "contains". Which in biology of course carries meaning. So, if your language doesn't stretch to distinguishing between 2 concepts like that you start losing the meaning…. Literally does this molecule belong in the membrane or is it encapsulated in a bag made of membrane that kind of thing."* (A0002)

> *"If the teacher or student lacks the necessary vocabulary or pronounces words in an unclear manner, the meaning is lost."* (A0006)

This observation implies that mastering the complex language used in specific academic domains is an essential component of oral proficiency. Their further mention of mathematics as a language of its own, with numerous terms and precise

pronunciation requirements, demonstrates the complexity involved in mastering and using specialised vocabulary for effective oral communication.

In relation to oral proficiency, participant A0005 highlighted the need for a diverse linguistic repertoire by connecting oral proficiency to the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and CALP framework and also by emphasising the importance of language comprehension, listening comprehension, and vocabulary for effective communication. They explained, *"So if I'm thinking of oral proficiency, I probably think of the BICS, so all the basic interpersonal communication skills... You need the listening comprehension aspect of it, the language comprehension aspect of it. You require vocabulary…"*

This was supported by participant A0003:

> *"So it is incredibly important to not just have a basic command of the language but to have a nuance understanding of not just academic language but fairly common general language." (A0003)*

Additionally, participant A0007 described an orally proficient person as someone who is skilled, experienced and practised. They emphasised, "*Proficiency has to do with competence, skill, experience, practice... how competent they are in using language to produce meaningful utterances that we can understand.*" Furthermore, they mentioned, "*Oral proficiency is about utterances and utterances have to do with the linguistic repertoire, the group of languages that learners (sic) can access in order to communicate meaningfully.*"

Lastly, participant A0010 expressed the importance of vocabulary in oral proficiency by stating, "*I would say if you have a good vocabulary...*"

Attribute 2: Accuracy

Seven participants acknowledged that accuracy is a fundamental element of oral proficiency. Accuracy (or correctness) focuses on the correctness and precision of a learner's language use (Michel, 2017). It involves using grammatically correct structures, accurate pronunciation, appropriate word choice, and adhering to the rules

or norms of the target language (Housen & Kuiken, 2009: 3). Accuracy is important for effective communication and avoiding misunderstandings.

Participant A0001 expressed their perspective by stating, "*I think it would be somebody who can communicate their ideas and their thoughts in such a way that whoever they are communicating to or speaking with are able to receive that message effectively.*" This response highlights the importance of accurate and effective communication, suggesting that accuracy is a vital component of oral proficiency. The significance of grammatical correctness and accurate pronunciation was further supported by participant A0002 who stated that, "*Oral proficiency to me as someone who can speak the language grammatically correctly. And in terms of pronunciation correctly.*"

Participant A0004 discussed oral proficiency in a classroom context, questioning whether a person is capable of understanding and carrying out oral instructions from teachers or fellow students. This perspective underscores the importance of accurate comprehension and the ability to accurately interpret and act upon oral information.

> *"If we move to a classroom situation, to a lecture hall situation, I think is the person good enough to understand when I give them an oral or they get an oral instruction from one of their teachers or from one of their fellow students, are they good enough to understand that instruction and to carry it out?"* *(A0004)*

Participants A0006 and A0008 mention the importance of using language that is understandable and appropriate for effective communication.

Participant A0006 provided insights into the role of accent in oral proficiency.

> *"your accent is understandable. I know that lots of people have accents. French people teaching maths in this country have an accent and accent is not the issue. Accent only becomes a problem when it's difficult to understand. Because its understanding, particularly in mathematics. If understanding is compromised, then the accent is a problem."* *(A0006)*

Participant A0008's consideration demonstrates the need for accurate language use in terms of appropriateness and context.

"…using language that is age appropriate."(A0008)

Participants A0005 and A0009 highlight the significance of understanding and responding accurately to messages for effective communication:

"you need proper pronunciation; you need communicative skills."

"Oral proficiency affects the language that the learners will pick up and receive from you." (A0005)

"I would say that it has to do with, I think two actions, it has to do with listening comprehension and then the ability to respond to the message proficiently. So I think it has to do with the, at that whole model of the sender-receiver, the sender sends a message, and the receiver is able to give correct feedback."(A0009)

Attribute 3: Fluency

It seemed as if the participants were not too concerned with the relationship between fluency and oral proficiency. Lennon (1990: 390) describes fluency as the ability to process a second language with "native-like rapidity". Fluency relates to the smoothness, speed, eloquence, and fluidity of a person's speech. It involves the ability to produce a second language with limited hesitations, reformulations, pauses, or disruptions (Michel, 2017). Fluency is closely linked to the automaticity and naturalness of language production, enabling learners to express their thoughts in real-time without significant effort and fewer instances of silence and repair (Housen & Kuiken, 2009: 3). When I asked the participants whether native proficiency is important it became clear why so few of them spoke about fluency.

Participants A0006, A0007 and A0008 emphasise the concept of fluency in their responses:

"It means that you speak fluent English, and you don't mum and ahh and mmm and long silences because you don't know the words."

"But I think they need to be proficient enough to teach fluently, to have the vocabulary and to be able to pronounce it in a good enough accent that it can be understood." (A0006)

"Okay, so basically defining proficient oral language is being able to be fluent and I would say fluent and consistent in the way you speak." (A0008)

Participant A0006 states that speaking fluent English means avoiding hesitations, pauses, conversational crutches and disruptions caused by not knowing the words. This aligns with the idea of fluency, as fluency involves producing language without interruptions and speaking smoothly and effortlessly. By emphasising the need for consistency, A0008 acknowledges the importance of smoothness and naturalness in language production, which are key components of fluency.

Perspectives on native proficiency

I was intrigued to explore the participants' perspectives on whether pre-service teachers should possess native-level proficiency in English for teaching purposes. The responses varied, but the prevailing consensus indicated that native proficiency is not deemed essential for pre-service teachers when instructing in English. This finding shed light on why fluency was seldom mentioned as a prerequisite for oral proficiency among my participants.

Participants A0001, A0010 and A0007 felt that native proficiency is not important as the learners who are being taught are not native speakers of English. Instead, participant A0007 argues that:

"What is important is that learners are able, that teachers are able to communicate, communicate their disciplinary knowledge so meaningfully that the learners are able to engage in the content."

Participant A0009 made an interesting statement when she argued that non-native English teachers could actually be better equipped to teach non-native learners.

"I found that sometimes people who struggled to learn the language might be better equipped to teach it."

She says that non-native English speakers may be more sensitive to the barriers faced by second-language English speakers and can adapt teaching interventions accordingly. Bilinguals and multilinguals have an advantage in making connections and explaining concepts using multiple language resources.

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Participants A0001, A0005 and A0006 agreed that native English speakers have an advantage but are not necessarily better teachers.

> *"No, I just think that the teach… that many of our teachers who are teaching are not necessarily bad teachers because their language levels are not native like speakers but there's definitely room for improvement because at the end of the day being proficient and being competent is going to increase your efficacy as a teacher. So I think it's important that we have good language usage from top down." (A0001)*

> *"I definitely think they have an advantage, I don't necessarily think they are better because I mean, if you think of the different roles of a teacher, oral proficiency doesn't make you a good or bad teacher, it definitely affects your teaching style." (A0005)*

This participant continues to contend that native English speakers have an advantage in terms of not having to correct themselves, setting a good example, and needing less research. However, it does not make them better teachers overall.

Oral proficiency beyond accent

Many participants argued that pre-service teachers who use English to teach should have good articulation and not have a marked accent. Two participants felt that we should look beyond accents when we explore oral proficiency:

> *"I learned very early on in my teaching career, and in my higher education career that you should never judge anyone's ability on their accent. Because there are some horrific South African English and South African Afrikaans accents out there and those accents do not mean that the person does not speak the language well. They might not sound like the Queen when I speak and then none of us do." (A0002)*

> *"We judge people on the way they speak the language and that's why I said right in the beginning, it's important not to, to take people's accents into consideration, because we immediately assume someone with a bad accent can't speak English properly. And that's just trash. That's just nonsense. That's got nothing to do with their ability to speak the language. They just*

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look at, just look at the whole of Australia, their accent is horrific, but they speak English very well." (A0002)

In this quote, participant A0002 expresses the idea that accent should not be used as a basis for judging someone's language ability. They highlight that having a non-standard or "horrific" South African English or Afrikaans accent does not necessarily indicate a lack of language proficiency. They acknowledge that their own accent may not conform to a particular standard (such as the Queen's English) and that this is a common experience for many people. This is supported by participant A0010 who views accent as less of a hindrance to comprehension, suggesting that familiarity and patience can help in understanding individuals with diverse accents:

"I'm not too bothered if somebody has an accent. I must say years ago it was something that really concerned me if somebody had a very heavy accent, and I really couldn't understand what they were saying. But I also noticed if I just took the time to listen and if I got used to the person, then I could understand after a while. Then the accent wasn't really such a big barrier." (A0010)

In conclusion, the exploration of oral proficiency characteristics through participant responses revealed valuable insights regarding the qualities that constitute a pre-service teacher with oral proficiency when using English to teach. Five major attributes emerged from the analysis: *complexity, accuracy, fluency, perspectives on native proficiency and oral proficiency beyond accent*. Overall, this comprehensive examination of oral proficiency characteristics provides valuable insights for understanding the qualities that contribute to effective oral communication in the context of pre-service English teachers. By considering complexity, accuracy, fluency, perspectives on native proficiency, and looking beyond accent, a more nuanced understanding of oral proficiency in teaching emerges.

4.2.2 Perspectives on pre-service teachers' oral proficiency

After establishing several criteria for oral proficiency as identified by the participants, I developed a curiosity about their perspective regarding the oral proficiency of the pre-service teachers whom they instruct. The participants highlighted several areas of

concern regarding the pre-service teachers' oral proficiency. Here are some of the issues they identified:

When asked about the oral proficiency of their pre-service teachers, all participants unanimously acknowledged that their students encountered certain difficulties relating to the CAF triad in this aspect. Participants A0001 and A0003 specifically highlighted vocabulary as a challenge:

> *"Vocabulary yes. Definitely also some vocabulary issues but I think when the student actually had the opportunity to prepare for the lesson or to prepare for their speech or whatever it is that they are performing or that they are speaking, they are a little bit more comfortable with the vocabulary. But being able to just on the spot speak they might find that challenging."* (A0001)

> *"As I've said vocabulary wise, they don't often have a very wide vocabulary. Both in just normal spoken communication in terms of language to describe objects, feelings, thoughts, and subject content. So vocabulary is often simple, very basic."* (A0003)

Complexity was clearly an issue as three participants noted that their students struggle with the skill of modulating their language to the context of their audience (the learners they teach), many arguing that this is a skill that is developed with exposure and experience:

> *"I think they find that difficult, especially the pre-service teachers. This is something that you gain with experience."* (A0001)

> *"No, it's a skill I think, like some people develop and some people never develop."* (A0002)

> *"They've never heard the more formal registers. They literally have never been exposed to that."* (A0003)

Participants A0001, A0002, A0005, A0007 and A0008 were more optimistic regarding their students' skill level in modulating language. Participant A0007 mentions how her students use it as a scaffolding technique while teaching. This phenomenon might

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stem from the emphasis placed on cultivating this crucial skill in educational courses where the focus is on acquiring diverse teaching approaches and methods.

Further evidence that students have not come to grips with complexity was presented when I asked the participants how skilled their students are in the use of academic language. It is important to note that when asked about their students' academic language proficiency most of the lecturers provided answers based on their students' written language proficiency. I will discuss this later.

Participant A0003 emphasised the significance of academic language skills for both students and teachers. They believe it is vital for students to develop academic language proficiency from an early stage of education.

> "It's definitely something that they lack. And I keep thinking that when we design a new program the one thing that we should start building in in every single program is academic proficiency. Now I know that students take a module in their first year on academic communication skills and that and I simply do not think that that's adequate. It's a very generalised module that they take. And what you need is… you need a module that's focused on a specific field. So you will literally need a science education module in terms of language." *(A0003)*

Participants A0002 and A0004 argued that students do not have the necessary academic vocabulary:

> *"So it's about vocabulary. It's about having the, the academic vocabulary to be able to write formally." (A0002)*

> *"…they might not always have a large vocabulary" (A0004)*

Participant A0006 noted that students studying mathematics generally possessed familiarity with subject-specific terminology but might encounter challenges in using English effectively. However, they cautioned against making English fluency a requirement due to the existing shortage of math teachers in South Africa:

> *"Most of them are very familiar with the vocabulary of mathematics and they can string that vocabulary with English that's good enough to bring the concept over accurately… Look, if we make them native English speakers,*

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they're going to have even fewer math's teachers than we currently have, and we already have a shortage. So we can't make that a requirement. But I think they need to be proficient enough to teach fluently, to have the vocabulary and to be able to pronounce it in a good enough accent that it can be understood."

Other participants expressed the belief that students' cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) was sufficient:

"I think most students do have the cognitive language proficiency, proficiency to be able to teach their subjects." (A0008)

"Some of the students are, have excellent, absolutely excellent CALP skills where there are other students who are not there at all. So I would, I would probably say 80% of students do have CALP, they have the basic CALP" (A0005)

Participant A0010 observed a wide range of proficiency levels among her students, spanning from barely sufficient to remarkably proficient, with many falling in between on the proficiency spectrum.

Regarding accuracy, a substantial number of errors were reported. Participants A0001, A0003, A0006 and A0008 reported grammatical errors, concord errors spelling and problems with pronunciation.

"Tenses are always a challenge for Afrikaans speakers, for myself as well. Our e's and r's are always a challenge. So tenses definitely… is something that we err on frequently. Grammar also, the singulars and the plurals using the correct subject verb agreement often occurs." (A0001)

"Poor. Sometimes I find myself sounding a bit like grammar police… Grammar you constantly hear exactly the same problems coming up the whole time. E's and R's are interchangeable. Past tense disappears, has, and have and had are intermingled. There are problems so yes in general. Yet somehow, they are communicating. Jumbled up, poor language often supported with non-verbal language which makes online teaching a real problem. Face to face you can often deduce what they're trying to say." (A0003)

"I find that concord is a problem. You know are we going to say "we is" or "we are" so that's a very simple one. So concord is one of the biggest problems. Concord and pronunciation. But for the rest you know what, they're not bad." (A0006)

"What do they struggle with the most? I would think when it comes to obviously verbal is pronunciation or oral. Where if its written I would say then it would be grammar and spelling." (A0008)

In conclusion, the participants' discussions shed light on the challenges and areas of concern related to accuracy in the English proficiency of pre-service teachers. Grammatical errors, concord errors, spelling issues, and problems with pronunciation were identified as recurring problems. Tenses, subject-verb agreement, and the sounds of "e" and "r" were highlighted as specific areas of difficulty. Despite these challenges, the participants acknowledged that communication still takes place, albeit sometimes in a jumbled and inadequate manner. These insights emphasise the importance of addressing accuracy issues in the language development of pre-service teachers to enhance their effectiveness in verbal and written communication.

In the exploration of pre-service teachers' oral proficiency, it is worth noting that the aspect of fluency in their English language skills was addressed by only a limited number of participants. Out of the diverse range of perspectives shared, only two participants (A0004 and A0003) explicitly discussed the importance of fluency though their responses were contradictory. Although the number of participants focusing on fluency was relatively small, their insights shed light on the significance of this characteristic in effective oral communication.

"But I think the biggest problem is there's not necessarily people who are fluent enough academically to teach English, that teach in that. What you often find especially amongst a lot of the Afrikaans students is they'll tell you 'ons praat Boere Engels'." (A0004)

The participant's statement highlights a perceived problem regarding the level of academic fluency among English teachers. They express the belief that some teachers lack the necessary level of fluency in English to effectively teach the language. The mention of "Boere Engels" among Afrikaans students suggests that they may resort to speaking a version of English that is influenced by Afrikaans, their

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native language. This could potentially lead to challenges in achieving the desired level of academic proficiency in English instruction. This stands in contrast to the response of participant A0003:

> *"You really get students who are so fluent and so good at expressing themselves".*

I found it noteworthy that participants used the following phrases to describe the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers whom they instruct or have had contact with:

> *"they can string that vocabulary with English that's **good enough** to bring the concept over accurately… to have the vocabulary and to be able to pronounce it in a **good enough** accent that it can be understood" (A0006)*

> *"Yet **somehow,** they are communicating. **Jumbled up, poor language** is often supported with non-verbal language which makes online teaching a real problem. Face to face you can often deduce what they're trying to say" (A0003)*

> *"But for the rest you know what, **they're not bad."** (A0006)*

With these responses they acknowledge that effective communication skills are important whilst acknowledging that their students have limitations. Sometimes some of the participants' descriptions of pre-service teachers' oral proficiency seemed incongruous to me as if they were satisfied with basic communication skills and did not really think cognitive academic language skills as important for a teacher who uses English to teach. It became clear later on when I realised that many of them see CALP only as a written skill.

When asked about the proficiency of their students, participants A0002, A0005 and A0009 struggled to provide a clear response. They felt that it was important to point out the challenges that their students face. Participant A0002 pointed out that the proficiency level depends on the student's background and the exposure they have had to English. Afrikaans-speaking students generally have a better foundation in English, while those who speak isiXhosa or isiZulu may face more challenges. Proficiency varies based on the individual's social environment and prior English education. While participant A0005 describes oral language proficiency as terrible for

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some students. Those who learn in their home language or come from urban schools tend to do well. However, students from rural areas face significant challenges due to a lack of proper English education in high school. Nevertheless, by the second and third year, there is noticeable progress, though not yet optimal. Finally, participant A0009 discusses the differences between first-language and second-language speakers. First-language speakers generally have more confidence and better language skills due to their exposure to English as a home language. Second-language speakers, on the other hand, may lack confidence and certain language skills, partly due to a lack of reading culture. Grammar is also highlighted as a challenge, and the participant acknowledges that learning a language is a lifelong process. I will discuss and provide additional data on some of these factors in the next section.

4.2.3   Contextualising the student teacher's oral proficiency

4.2.3.1   Factors influencing the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers.

When discussing the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers, several factors were identified by lecturers as influential in shaping their language skills and abilities. Gaining an understanding of these factors not only offers valuable insights but also sheds light on the challenges and considerations encountered by aspiring educators.

Lack of confidence

One of the major contributors to poor oral proficiency among pre-service teachers, which the participants identified, is a lack of confidence. These two factors are interrelated, as a lack of confidence can hinder effective communication and hinder the development of oral proficiency skills. When pre-service teachers lack confidence, they may feel hesitant to speak up, struggle to express themselves clearly or avoid engaging in oral interactions altogether. This lack of confidence can impede their ability to practice and improve their oral proficiency, creating a cycle where their proficiency remains limited. Lack of confidence and anxiety when speaking was also a theme that emerged from my literature study.

> *"Well no. I think not all of them [are confident]. Our students who are of our higher levels and who are in the school set up and who are actually working*

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in the school full time, especially those of our learners placed at our English schools are much more confident." (A0001)

"The ones who do [speak] are the ones who are confident in their language ability. The ones who are not confident in the language ability, they form, unfortunately, the silent majority. So, which comes first? Confidence, and then the ability or the ability and then confidence in that ability?" (A0002)

"So, they can't really participate in class, because, you know, they feel too self-conscious, or they actually literally can't express themselves" (A0005)

Two participants argued that teachers might lack this confidence because they lack the confidence necessary to stand up in front of people and also might lack subject knowledge. So they feel unsure of themselves.

"Students are not confident teaching period. They…it's the one thing that I spend my time with. Especially the PGCEs is convincing them that confidence comes with time. Yes, there are certain barriers with English but remember nowadays if a student has gone through FET and they've gone through university and they get to PGCE, they can help themselves in the language. So, it's not the language that is the barrier… it's really the confidence of standing up in front of a class and speaking." (A0003)

"I think, there are teachers that did not perhaps have the level of education as many teachers do have, that for instance, go to the most known or the universities, the, better universities, I think these teachers do lack confidence in communication skills. But this might also be, I think, this is also closely linked with teachers that do not have confidence in the subject knowledge that they teach, for instance, if they teach maths, or English and they don't feel confident in the content, they don't feel confident in themselves that they have the ability or the knowledge in that specific subject area in order to enhance learning, I think then they just fall back on talk and chalk, give a lecture, and then ask learners to copy from the blackboard." (A0008)

Confidence in language ability plays a crucial role, and it can vary based on exposure, teaching experience, and subject knowledge. Building confidence over time remains a key focus in teacher education.

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Insufficient teaching practice: A barrier to language development

The main reason identified for the lack of confidence, according to participants, was the fact that pre-service teachers do not get enough exposure in the classroom during their practicals. Most of the work-integrated learning is spent on observation thus pre-service teachers do not get enough practice talking in front of a class.

> *"It definitely has to do with how much they actually practice using the language and how much exposure they have to it... (A0005)*

> *So obviously their exposure and the amount of teaching they have done in English influences that and so it varies according to the amount of experience that they have." (A0001)*

> *"You are right when you say you only improve English by speaking or improving the other language by speaking it. It's like teaching, you only learn how to teach by teaching, you know, you can read all the books and study all the theory but until you have stood in front of a class, you're not a teacher." (A0002)*

> *"I must say in my experience yes [students lack confidence], but it starts out in the beginning of the year or with the first presentations. You will get students who are very awkward and who feel a bit shy to speak English. You will see it in their presentations. But I must say as the year progresses, by the time of their fourth year then their confidence has really grown." (A0010)*

One participant noted that there is a definite distinction in confidence and skill level between pre-service teachers who work full-time in schools and those who only do practicals. Another participant also pointed out that:

> *"The ones who are not confident, they just don't speak, they just don't open their mouth in the lecture" (A0002).*

This points towards a vicious cycle regarding oral proficiency. Pre-service teachers often lack confidence since they do not get enough practice and as a result of their lack of confidence, they are less likely to speak up.

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Insufficient exposure and practice during pre-service teachers' practicals, coupled with a lack of confidence, perpetuate a cycle of limited oral proficiency, further compounded by the university's language policy and students' feelings of shame and insecurity regarding their language ability.

Attitudes towards English

I was curious as to why English as a medium of instruction is still such a problem in South Africa as it has been an academic language in our country for many decades. I wanted to know how teachers can get by with knowing only the bare minimum of English since it is South Africa's unofficial lingua franca. I asked the participants why they thought English proficiency was such a significant problem in South Africa. The data I collected uncovered a few reasons why the situation is not improving. Three participants argued that the attitude that many people have towards English as LOLT is a problem.

This negative attitude often results from ideologies in people's culture. This was not surprising as my literature study also revealed that language is a contentious issue in South Africa. It became clear from my research that two participants felt that many Afrikaans teachers were more likely to be unenthusiastic about teaching in English.

> *"I think what is more important is the attitude towards language that you speak rather than your ability to speak it. If someone is appointed to teach in English, the assumption is that they have a certain level of proficiency in English. I have sat in lectures where an Afrikaans speaking person who used English, but the attitude with which they used English was an indicator to me that they weren't having fun." (A0002)*

According to one participant (who teaches at an Afrikaans-medium higher education institution) students are reluctant about improving their English and are more comfortable speaking *boere English.* Another participant provided an interesting reason for this phenomenon by suggesting that many South Africans might harbour some resentment towards English because of colonisation and events that happened in the past. She argues:

> *"You know just over a hundred years ago we came out of the Anglo-Boer war. And so, at the time, English was the language of the enemy. And so often that kind of attitude has just lingered on, it's not expressed like that*

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possibly, but the heart of the attitude very often remains… They find it culturally insulting." (A0006)

This is supported by another participant who argues that e*ducation policies made during Apartheid* have had a lasting effect on the inequality of education in South Africa. She also argues that some South Africans still harbour bias and archaic ideologies towards English remnants of the *nationalism movement* of the Apartheid era.

> *So, it can also be a thing of I almost wanna say Nationalism among different groups in South Africa. I think it's more of a barrier, but like I know a lot of Afrikaans people who get very upset if they hear my kids are in an English school. Like I'm killing... I'm murdering our language with a knife personally… In every culture, you'll find your extremes. And I believe that you will get people who feel this way in a variety of contexts. (A0010)*

One participant claimed that since language is such a contentious issue in our society and since people speak many different languages in our country this often leads to *misunderstanding* and *disagreement* and even violence and aggression. This was supported by another participant who states:

> *I think it's because of pre-and post-Apartheid. I think we have a language fight in South Africa. There's kind of this language fight where English people want to have English and Afrikaans people will want to have Afrikaans and African [language speakers] will want to have their… I mean it's a lot of languages that we are dealing with. (A0008)*

Another participant also spoke about aggression. However, she mentioned how students become combative when addressed on their language abilities. She theorises that the reason for this is because they are embarrassed or frustrated by their lack of proficiency, and this leads to them lashing out (A0005).

One participant was very positive about the language situation in our country and argued that there is hope for the development of languages in South Africa and that researchers play a significant role in this process by providing *meaningful contributions on issues such as translanguaging.*

The impact of shame and bullying on oral proficiency

One participant provided another reason for poor oral proficiency when he argues that students feel embarrassed about their language ability and says that the reason for this is:

> *"the university's language policy is saying that if you enrol for a certain course, the university language policy assumes that you are competent in that language because that is the language you took at high school levels. So, I think that a lot of the students feel ashamed in the sense that they are supposed to be sufficient by you know, the first year, so admitting that they don't really understand what the lecturer is saying, or that they don't really know what is going on, makes them feel incompetent, and it makes them feel insecure"* (A0005).

Another participant supported this idea of shame and a culture of bullying, but he had another perspective on the matter:

> *"Unfortunately, I think in South Africa, the culture is very much a culture of shame. So, if you try and speak English, other people who can speak English, laugh at you, and people who can't speak English also laugh at you. So that prohibits or prevents the more timid second-language speakers from ever venturing into a proper use of English as a language of communication. So, it's essentially the change of culture and the changes in attitude towards people who want to speak English. I always find it ironic that people who don't speak English well themselves, they find it fine to laugh at other people who can't speak English. And if someone laughs at you often enough, you just going to stop, especially if that person is important to you. Especially if it's a peer group member, or its someone you feel you're looking up to like a lecturer. If someone stands up and asks me a question, and I burst out laughing at the use of language. They're not going to ask a question again, and I've lost them for that for that module. They're not going to pay attention or take me seriously again after that and unfortunately, there's a lot of that happening. There's a lot of that going on. We judge people on the way they speak the language and that's why I said right in the beginning, it's important not to, to take people's accents into consideration, because we immediately assume someone with a bad accent can't speak English properly. And that's just trash. That's just nonsense. That's got nothing to do with their ability to*

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> *speak the language. They just look at, just look at the whole of Australia,*
> *their accent is horrific, but they speak English very well." (A0002)*

According to this participant, this leads to fear and many students do not speak up as they are scared to be mocked. He pointed out that fellow students and participants should not be as critical of pre-service teachers' language ability and should rather provide encouragement that it is acceptable to make mistakes.

The influence of a culture of perfectionism on oral proficiency

As one participant pointed out, this issue might be avoided, and students might gain more confidence in speaking if they were encouraged to make more mistakes and if there was not so much focus on outcomes and marks.

> *"In most schools, learners aren't encouraged to make mistakes. It's always*
> *a red pen and detention and marks. So, this obsession with outcomes and*
> *marks hinders the learners to be able to take chances and make mistakes.*
> *So, I think oral proficiency has to do with you shouldn't be scared to make*
> *mistakes. And teachers should provide learners with spaces in which they*
> *are encouraged to speak even if they make a lot of mistakes." (A0009)*

Alternatively, other participants pointed out that the problem does not necessarily lie with the pre-service teachers' oral proficiency but rather that students lack confidence in their teaching abilities as they do not have sufficient content knowledge. One participant pointed out that the students who teach the subject English are generally more confident in using the language.

> *"obviously those that are majoring in the module of English or to teach the*
> *subject English, they would be the stronger candidates." (A0008)*

Implications of low standards and educational inequality on oral proficiency

In an attempt to determine why some pre-service teachers had inferior oral proficiency to others I asked the participants' opinions. One factor that emerged pointed towards the low standards of some schools. Two participants pointed out that this phenomenon was more prevalent in rural schools. It is no secret that South African schools have a history of inequality. This means that many people attend rural schools are generally the ones who struggle most with English proficiency. In contrast, students who attend

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urban schools generally perform much better as they have access to better *resources*. Two participants clearly illustrated this inequality when they stated that:

> *"So, at university, it'll depend on where they come from. So, kids who come from an Afrikaans school, they will generally, to some degree, they will have a better foundation in English because I think Afrikaans speakers generally get a better level of English as a second language or first traditional language at school than for example, people who speak isiXhosa or isiZulu or go to schools where that is the language of teaching and learning." (A0002)*

> *"I think our students that come from rural areas, they really do struggle because they struggle with the basic components like listening and speaking skills. So, they can't really participate in class, because, you know, they feel too self-conscious, or they actually literally can't express themselves" (A0005)*

Participant A0002 suggests that learners from Afrikaans-speaking schools tend to have a better foundation in English, possibly because they receive English education as a second language or as a first traditional language. This insight acknowledges the impact of educational environments and language policies on language proficiency. In contrast participant A0005's response underscores the importance of considering students' diverse linguistic backgrounds and the potential barriers they face when it comes to oral proficiency.

Lack of support from DBE

Participants identified several other problems at schools which affect the oral proficiency of in-service teachers. One example is that schools and teachers do not receive enough support from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) who have *unrealistic expectations* about how language should be taught. The focus in schools is usually also only on *marks and assessments* and not on *spontaneous communication*, skill-building, or *creativity*. Another problem is the fact that many teachers use outdated teaching methods such as *teacher-centred approaches* and *drill exercises*. This is not conducive to conversation and communication in the classroom as lessons usually end up with learners parroting the answers in a sing-song voice back to the teacher. Some of the content in English classes is also *outdated* like writing a friendly letter. One participant made the argument that schools should

encourage learners to recite indigenous poems and use modern examples of poetry like rap artists as this would encourage communication, as opposed to *the old men of poetry*. Another contributing problem found in schools was the fact that not all teachers consider language an important skill that *needs to be taught across the curriculum in every subject* and teachers need to *collaborate more.*

4.2.3.2 Enhancing oral proficiency in education: considerations and perspectives

The oral proficiency of pre-service teachers is influenced by various factors that extend beyond linguistic competence. In this section, we delve into the insights shared by participants, highlighting the importance of critical language awareness and paralinguistic skills. Challenges such as the prevalence of 'bad English' and the debate over a single medium of instruction are discussed. Despite the obstacles, efforts to enhance oral proficiency in education are crucial for empowering both teachers and learners.

Oral proficiency beyond linguistic competence

Regarding oral proficiency, several participants highlighted the importance of additional skills beyond linguistic competence. Specifically, they emphasised the significance of cultivating critical language awareness and refining paralinguistic skills. *Critical language skills* involve understanding and examining language in its social, cultural, and historical contexts, recognising power dynamics, biases, and implications embedded in language, and being able to make informed judgments about language choices and communication. One participant felt that these skills are extremely important:

> *"So if we're talking about English, oral proficiency, it will be I think it would be, I think it will be a disservice on my part, to talk about it without referring to multilingualism, which is the norm in South Africa. Because of the monolingual trends that are currently being experienced in the linguistic space of ESL, sometimes it seems that we do not honour these spaces were teachers come from. Pre-service teachers need to go through a reorientation of understanding that they teach in multilingual spaces. And teaching in those spaces does not make learners in any way, deficit it in any way. So it's not about English language. It's about learners learning another language on top of what they already have. So I think the first understanding is for the teachers to have the knowledge of the context in which the teach." (A0007)*

Paralinguistic skills refer to tone, pitch, body language, gestures, and facial expressions. Paralinguistic features play a critical role in communication as they have the ability to completely alter the intended message. One participant described oral proficiency as:

"So I think it's more in terms of vocabulary and the words you choose and how you put your words together and construct and express yourself with your body language." (A0010)

Another participant (A0003) delivered an extensive discourse highlighting the significance of gestures as a valuable tool for enhancing comprehension in the science classroom:

"Now there's another interesting thing that comes up in science classes that I haven't mentioned. And that is that you often use gestures. So when you're trying to explain a concept… let's say you're trying to talk about levers in… you know your elbow is a lever. The first you will do is to say look, it works like this, and you demonstrate. The next thing you do is to use common language to say look, the bottom of your arm moves towards your shoulder etcetera. And then the next step is to say now, let's translate this into science language and for them I call it science language. How are we going to say this in science? And then you talk about the proximal part of the limb that moves in a specific way, it is a specific type of lever that you get there and so on. And then you use the scientific terminology which also means… you know now that I'm thinking of it, I never really verbalised it like this. But you're going from the simplest communication which is often just gestures and very simple language to a description in common language and then the scientific language. And I hear in cases where I go out to quick lessons that the students will mimic that. The students will pick up that there is a language called scientific language. Where we use all these fancy terminologies."

Language challenges in South African education

Participant A0003 points out that although research states that it is more beneficial for learners to study in their home language, this is one of the government's goals that has not been realised yet in South Africa. This was further supported by another participant (A0002) who argues that the reason many pre-service teachers do not use proper English is that they were not exposed to the kind of *academic English* that would allow them to teach effectively. Instead, the only exposure they receive is the American English they hear on television. It creates as many participants put it, a vicious cycle, beginning with teachers who speak poor English, and this eventually results in students speaking improper English. He points out that most South Africans

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have a culture of '*bad English'* which starts at school and that it has become South Africa's version of a patchy creole. He says:

> *"I think South Africans think they speak English better than they actually do. And my joke is always the new language is bad English. People don't even know that the English they speak is bad because they've never been exposed to good English." (A0002)*

Another participant (A0003) supported this argument when she pointed out that many pre-service teachers, that she works with, have '*verbal poverty'*. As she puts it these teachers do not have the necessary vocabulary to explain basic, let alone difficult concepts to learners properly. She was also one of many participants who argued that people are judged by society on their language ability. She pointed out how your class distinction becomes visible when you cannot speak proper English and that people might judge you as unintelligent if you cannot speak properly. She says:

> *"You could so clearly hear the people who come from private schools…and the people who had their education in a rural area which we all know carries a certain stigma. You hear someone using a rich language and immediately you have an assumption about the education they had. You hear someone using verbally impoverished language and you make assumptions about the education they had." (A0003)*

In the face of many challenges in schools and universities regarding oral proficiency, some participants felt that many problems in education could be solved if all teaching was conducted in English.

> *"It will physically not be possible to teach our children, especially from FET level onwards and then at university level, in so many languages. So, the reality is that you have to start switching to a common language which happens to be English" (A0003)*

One participant also made the case that using one language in South Africa would help us overcome many disagreements as there would be fewer misunderstandings which usually arose because South Africans all speak different languages. She also argued that South Africans could then form a new bond/connection centred around English. The practical aspects also make sense as it is difficult to accommodate 11

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official languages in schools and higher education institutions and many of the African languages in our country do not enjoy the same support as English or Afrikaans. Furthermore, an argument was made that using English as a primary LOLT would be beneficial to the learners as it is the *universal business language* and would provide them with the means to access important commodities such as jobs and education as most *learning materials* are largely only available in English.

Concerns and alternatives

On the other hand, some participants did not agree with the premise of using one language in instruction as they felt that it would not improve oral proficiency, found it unfair, and *politically incorrect* and argued that it would undermine *education* and *identity* and make people angry as well as discourage student teachers who could make a difference. When asked whether she supports the ideology of one language in education, a participant made a good point about the link between language and identity. She explained that language is very closely linked with identity, individual history, and culture and that if we advocate for only one language in the curriculum, we are telling learners that their history and identity is unimportant, erasing that culture and teachers will be losing out on valuable funds of knowledge.

> *"I think that would be a very sad day if it ever happened. Language, according to Fanon in his writings, does carry a very important, important aspect of our identity it is what we use to identify ourselves. It is what we use to communicate with. And the beauty of language is that it's not one language, it's many languages that we have access to, that we can communicate with. I will support an argument that says how can you include more languages in the school curriculum, rather than one that says how can we have a universal language in the school system because the day we do that, the funds of knowledge, the assets, the cultural, or the community knowledges that our learner to bring into the classroom through their linguist, through the linguistic communication will be gone. So, we essentially are denying the existence the prior existence of that learner in our classroom, if we deny them their language." (A0007)*

This participant argued that it would be more beneficial to encourage South African pre-service teachers to learn about multilingualism and the practices that support

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English second-language acquisition in the classroom such as Classroom English. In other words, the teacher's English would be sufficient if he/she can provide instruction, discipline the learners, and give general feedback. Other suggestions include only changing the medium of instruction in *secondary schools to English* or teaching in English but providing the learners with *teaching materials in their home language*.

4.2.1.3   Exploring the advantages and disadvantages of oral proficiency/non-proficiency

Three participants referred to the ability of English to connect people in South Africa. Participants made this remark on the ground that South Africa is a very diverse country with 12 official languages, a variety of cultures, races, and traditions. It that sense English as the lingua franca of South Africa has the ability to transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries and connect people. One lecturer did not agree with this statement. He said:

> *"How many people regionally or leave their specific region to necessitate the use of English? I'm not saying don't teach English, I'm just saying that firstly start off with your home language, teach your basic subjects, establish your basic principles in your home language and slowly but surely bring in English. The situation … there's enough articles and research to prove my point. The situation in South Africa, the practical situation in terms of children not having basic mathematical language functions by a certain age just proves it again, because they are being taught a language that they don't have the grammatical and the syntactic background of, that they don't have the association, it brings in that anxiety aspect that I've just mentioned now."*
> *(A0004)*

One participant argued that being proficient in English as medium of instruction is important as it provides access to job opportunities:

> *"If you go to an interview, unless it's at a specifically Afrikaans school, most schools are either bilingual or multilingual or they're English. And you open your… you look beautiful, you dress beautifully, and you present yourself in an excellent sort of way, looking professional and you open your mouth, and you speak bad English, it immediately creates a poor impression. And very often the interviewing body consists of parents and some teachers. And the*

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parents are immediately thinking to themselves I want my child to learn maths and the vocabulary that is associated with mathematics, and I want my children to speak to it properly and they're not going to get it from this person." (A0006)

Another participant supported this argument by suggesting other situations that oral proficiency in English provides access to:

"English in South Africa is the language of teaching; it means that it's the language of learning. It's the language of assessment. It's also a language of trade, language of Business, language of the media. So if you understand it in those contexts, that it is the language that allows access or denies access to someone, for example, if you want to trade in business, you might need to be able to speak in English, if you want to do well, in the academic sphere, you might need to do, to speak English, or write in English, or communicate in some form in English in that context. So, in, given its centrality as the language of currents, both in the academic and non-academic space, it is very important to be proficient in it." (A0007)

4.2.1.4   Strategies for improving oral proficiency of pre-service teachers.

I was interested to know whether there are any strategies or remedial practices at universities to help pre-service teachers who struggle, to develop their oral proficiency. I received many interesting responses. It seems that some participants practice intervention and remediation in class by scaffolding their lessons and targeting oral proficiency by encouraging communication in their classes. Participants also try to set a good example by personally demonstrating skilful English proficiency and suitable classroom practices as one participant who teaches English methodology showed:

"Right, so as a lecturer I place a lot of emphasis on vocabulary. So, for me, it's important that they are able to define the terminology that we use. I also present all my lessons in English where I really explain the terminology to them and then I require them to use that as well" (A0001)

Another participant conducted a similar practice where she would type in difficult words on the Miriam-Webster online dictionary and show students how to pronounce the difficult words.

"Now I must say the one thing that I do is…and here I'm helped by the fact that my first language is Afrikaans. I can say to students listen; English is not my first language. And I didn't talk like this in the beginning. I learnt to speak full sentences. I have learnt to use terminology. I have deliberately learnt words that I can use in class. And then I say to them if they have problems with pronunciation what they should do is to go to websites like Miriam Webster where they open up or they type in the word that they are uncertain about and I say to them in the privacy of your own study or room, you practice. And I will actually demonstrate that in a class. I will say okay, so to Merriam Webster Type in homogenous and then you press play. You know that they play the sound. And the people… the person will say "homogenous", and I say to them I will say "homogenous". And they will say "homogenous". And I will practice that word until I get the pronunciation right. That sort of seems to help students to accept that we're all struggling. And they have said to me afterwards… some students have given me feedback that they've started doing that. Practicing by using pronunciation help on YouTube" (A0003)

One other participant admitted that she uses intentional code-switching in the class as remedial practice (A0007). Three participants made references to making mistakes. In their words, the focus in class should not be perfection but rather by showing students that it is acceptable to make mistakes in class and that no one is going to mock you, it would improve students' confidence and decrease their self-consciousness. Other participants felt it was important to target students' attitudes and biases towards languages by teaching them about concepts such as multilingualism and Classroom English. Another participant felt that universities should create a standard for oral proficiency that pre-service teachers need to meet.

Furthermore, most of the universities that the participants came from have a compulsory module/course that first years must take which is specifically targeted at improving proficiency in English, specifically *grammar* and *language structures and conventions*. However, many of these modules are targeted at improving *written* and not spoken English.

"So, in the first year of their course, the first-year students have one module where we do 'teaching of English', and we focus specifically on language

grammar and language structures and conventions. So, we basically do matric English or high school English where we really just revise all of the rules and everything. We give them activities to do. But once again, mostly written, not a lot of oral." (A0001)

"But one main strategy that the University is definitely implementing is the fact that they've made academic language modules compulsory. So, in those academic, in those academic language modules, they are basically addressing the skills that should have been taught at high school level, or that should have been at least being well developed at high school levels. So, the academic language that our students do at University level is not always, in my opinion, University level English. So, I think the academic language modules that they get forced to do and they also do literacy modules where it's basically all about academic writing, and how to write an essay, how to write a letter, how to reference, the basic things that they basically need to know to survive in the higher education sector." (A0005)

Many of the intervention practices used by universities were difficult to implement as a result of the COVID pandemic. As a result of the COVID protocols participants had no contact with students and all forms of communication took place virtually and this had a detrimental effect on students. Another issue raised by a participant was the fact that some participants did not want to participate in these intervention programmes:

"Yes, I think many universities have sort of an intervention program. The problem with those is, is they very quickly get labelled as discriminatory. So, you know, why should I have to do it? I speak English well. It's because I'm Black. Or it's because I'm coloured words, because I'm Indian, that I have to go and do this language proficiency. No, it's because you don't speak English properly. But people don't want to hear that, people don't believe that." (A0002)

Finally, participants also identified some evidence of strategies that pre-service teachers already use to enhance meaning-making in classrooms. Participants said that teachers use tools such as *pictures* or *videos* to explain concepts*, questioning techniques* and focus on *explicit vocabulary*. Another common strategy that was used is *rephrasing* or *repetition*. *Code-switching* was also a popular technique used by pre-service teachers as well as using *movement and gesturing* to support what is being said. One participant described this strategy being used in a life science classroom to

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illustrate how breathing works. She illustrates the importance that gestures play in communication when she states:

> *"It [gestures] prevents your miscommunication where you can use verbal cues of what is happening. The moment you start using that gesture you take away a lot of uncertainty. You prevent a lot of misconception…"* *(A0003)*

Some participants also report seeing pre-service teachers use *breathing exercises* to improve communication as well as *music* and *rhyming*. With younger children, pre-service teachers used *roleplaying*, *fantasy play* and acting to communicate. Other strategies include *group work, translanguaging and summarising*. These communication strategies are very useful in classrooms where English is a second language and should become part of every teacher's repertoire.

Participants argued that the only effective way to break the cycle of poor oral proficiency is to provide the current pre-service teachers with the proper training. The problem, as one participant pointed out, was that the structure of the current curriculum leaves no *time* for teachers to develop or practice these skills. Furthermore, teachers are overloaded with assessments and administration and lose incentive, motivation, and the energy to develop new skills.

> *"And so, I think it's to two aspects. They think that it doesn't work really, it's, there's no time to be creative. There is no time to focus on the learners or self-directed learning in the classroom. And I think also, they're so overwhelmed by the curriculum and also almost bullied or overshadowed by senior teachers that prescribe what they should be doing, but I think it's definitely possible. We need for teachers to be creative, and I have seen it in so many schools, but really what makes me very sad at my daughter's school as well, especially in languages and history, as well, the teachers, even though they're youngish, they resort to token chalk writing from the board, and all those terrible things that I had to endure during the 1980s."* *(A0009)*

> *"But to consciously try and facilitate and use these different skills that you actually want to use, that you know will be effective, in a situation where the class is too full, you have too many lessons, you have too many extracurricular activities, there's no time for planning and to do these things.*

You need hours and hours … like two thirds of it is planning and then one third is actually doing it in practice." (A0010)

Four participants highlighted the challenges and limitations of intervention programmes offered at higher education institutions.

'I think many universities have sort of an intervention program. The problem with those is, is they very quickly get labelled as discriminatory. So you know, why should I have to do it? I speak English well. It's because I'm Black. Or it's because I'm coloured words, because I'm Indian, that I have to go and do this language proficiency. No it's because you don't speak English properly. But people don't want to hear that, people don't believe that.' (A0002)

Now, I get away with talking about language. Now explain to the someone these issues about being judged because of language and that's important that their language proficiency improves. But apart from that intervention in the classroom there's no real, solid intervention. (A0003)

I suppose making a module available where academic English is taught, and ordinary spoken English proficiency is part of the content of such a module. I don't think that could be a bad idea. I do however think that it won't be politically acceptable. Yeah, because it's associated with culture and its associated with identity. And the moment you start messing with somebody's identity and you're messing with somebody's culture, you're in trouble. (A0006)

I think it also has to do with teacher training, I think, I think it was very negative, I think it was, when was it with teacher colleges were closed down early 2000's. I think this was a big mistake by the Department of Basic Education. And I think those colleges focused a lot on practical teaching skills in the classroom environment. But all these colleges were closed down… So I think that that led to a lot of teachers not being sufficiently trained. (A0009)

4.2.4 Lack of clarity

During my analysis, it became evident that certain points of discussion caused confusion or lacked clarity among the participants.

4.2.4.1   Misunderstanding of the primary objective

When I asked the participants about the importance of oral proficiency two of them misunderstood the question and seemed to think that I was questioning mother-tongue instruction versus English-only instruction.

> *In South Africa with 11 languages where there is no clear distinction between this is a school that teaches Sotho and this is a school that teaches IsiXhosa, yes English is the answer. (A0002)*

> *I'm not saying don't teach English, I'm just saying that firstly start off with your home language, teach your basic subjects, establish your basic principles in your home language and slowly but surely bring in English. (A0004)*

I also often had the sense that it was difficult for the lecturers to focus on the oral proficiency of the pre-service teachers as their remarks often turned to the proficiency of the learners.

> *And to be very careful with your assessment criteria, so that you include the cultural context of all of the learners that you consider. (A0005)*

> *Well firstly for anyone who has anything to do with the outside world, English is the spoken language. So, if you what your learners to be prepared to cope in the outside world, they need to be proficient in English because… and I say that to my students. When they go for interviews… (A0006)*

> *So, you're asking yourself how skilful learners are able to use the English language through utterances so that they are complete, what they utter is comprehensible, what their output is something that come on can understand and appreciate. So, for me oral proficiency is a showcase, is the learner showing us what they have experienced in language, what they have practiced in language, what skills they have in language, and how competent they are in playing or using language to produce meaningful utterances that we can understand. (A0007)*

4.2.4.2   Knowledge of academic language proficiency

When asked about their students' academic language proficiency most of the lecturers provided answers based on their students' written language proficiency and some of

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them seemed to think there is no connection between academic language proficiency and oral proficiency.

> *I don't think there's necessarily a connection between academic writing and language ability. (A0002)*

> *It's not necessarily that the students don't know how to do it, but they need to be physically taught and reminded that in academic writing you can't use the first person for example. (A0004)*

> *I: How skilled would you say your students are in the use of academic language? P: Not very. On a scale of 1 – 10 I'd place them on maybe a 4.*
> *I: And where do you usually see this? Is it in their writing? When they speak… how do you…*
> *P: In their writing. (A0006)*

> *So it's developed in the practice of learning. It's seen in the vocabulary they choose to use in their writing, rather than in their teaching. (A0007)*

> *on a third-year level, I would say they have finally grasped the concept of academic writing. I wouldn't say they're on a proficient level, but I would say they're on a level where practice makes perfect. (A0008)*

It would seem as if some of the participants did not make a connection between the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers' CALP.

4.2.4.3   Knowledge of Classroom English

At the start of my data generation, I had hoped to question the participants about the role of Classroom English and its relationship to oral proficiency, but it soon became clear that the participants were not familiar with the concept. The participants gave the following definitions for Classroom English:

Participants A0001, A0003, A0005 and A0010 defined Classroom English as the language used during communication and instruction in the classroom:

> *the language that the teachers and the learners use to communicate, not only the academics but everything that's happening in the classroom. (A0001)*

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Well its exactly what you're saying. It's the language that they're using to communicate to convey information in your subject. (A0003)

Classroom English is all of the different skills, I would define it as a holistic term. So it would definitely be listening, speaking, reading, and writing. (A0005)

I would define it as a subject area, what you teach for being for instance, English first additional language or English home language. And I will also define it as the language of teaching and learning, the medium through which not just English but other subjects are also taught. (A0010)

Participants A0002, A0004, A0006, and A0008 offered diverse and somewhat conflicting definitions, ranging from perceiving Classroom English as a subject, the curriculum set by the government, a required standard in the teaching space, to the proficiency level of learners.

Classroom English to me would be English of an acceptable technical and grammatical level so that home language English speakers would be able to easily understand and communicate with the person speaking English. (A0002)

I think in terms of instruction of bringing across knowledge or bringing across concepts, classroom English that all depends on the level of proficiency of the learners sitting in front of you. (A0004)

The teacher or the student who's teaching is operating within a professional space and there are certain standards required. (A0006)

So I would define classroom English as the prescribed curriculum that is set by the government, especially I mean situated in South Africa (A0008).

Based on the information provided, it seems that the participants' definitions of Classroom English were not entirely accurate or comprehensive. While they touched on some aspects of Classroom English, such as communication, proficiency levels, and its role in teaching and learning, their definitions lacked depth and did not fully encompass the specialised and idiomatic nature of Classroom English. They also did not explicitly address aspects such as managing the classroom, vocabulary

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development, and creating a positive learning environment, which is highlighted in the scholarly sources.

4.2.4.4   Responsibility

When inquiring about intervention strategies employed to enhance the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers, several participants exhibited uncertainty regarding the individual accountable for this responsibility. Notably, at least three participants expressed that it fell outside their portfolio, citing their densely packed curricula, lack of expertise and lack of time as a hindrance to implementing the desired strategies.

> *'To be honest, I haven't really given any intervention or remedial assistance to any students who have struggled... So to be honest, there has been very little to non-intervention in a specific student competency.' (A0001)*

> *'I don't support them because I don't have the time or the expertise.' (A0006)*

> *'I'd love to, but my time is really limited because I've got all these other things that I need to do… It's very nice to see that the majority of them at the end of the fourth year have a much better confidence in teaching English.' (A0004)*

> *…at University level, it's almost too late.' (A0005)*

> *'the university's language policy is saying that if you enrol for a certain course, the university language policy assumes that you are competent in that language because that is the language you took at high school levels.'*

4.2.5   Assessing oral proficiency

The second part of my interview questions focused on addressing my secondary research question which was:

What criteria ought to be considered as key when assessing the oral proficiency of South African teachers who use English as a medium of instruction?

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In this section, I will present the data from my interviews which attempt to answer this question. My goal with this part of the interview was to establish a list of criteria that could help me design an assessment protocol that could be used to establish the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers who use English to teach. However, my questions also uncovered various attitudes towards assessment as a formal means of categorising student teachers' oral proficiency. These conversations will also be described in this section.

4.2.5.1   Perceptions regarding the assessment of oral proficiency

I wanted to know how successful the participants thought an assessment protocol measuring the oral proficiency of South African teachers could be. The responses I received were mixed. The MRTEQ (2015: 15) document states that

> *It is expected that all new teachers should be **proficient** in the use of at least one official language as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT), and **partially proficient** (i.e. sufficient for purposes of ordinary conversation) in at least one other official language (including South African Sign Language). All new ITE qualifications must be **endorsed** to indicate the holder's level of competence in specific languages by using appropriate labels, for example: LoLT (English) and conversational competence (isiZulu).*

Challenging the assessment of oral proficiency

Three participants did not agree with the idea of a standardised assessment protocol that could establish the oral proficiency of South African teachers even though this is mandated by policy (DHET, 2015). Their responses were insightful. Participant A0006 opposes standardised assessment protocols, stating concerns about causing offence and discouraging individuals from pursuing teaching careers. They express scepticism about the usefulness of such assessments.

> *"I disagree with it because I think it is politically incorrect. I think it's going to cause a problem and I think it is going to turn people away from careers*

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where they could have made a difference. You know it is a sensitive issue and I think people are going to take offence…" (A0006)

Participant A0007 challenges the notion of a standardised English that teachers need to adhere to, considering the multilingual context of their country. They believe that as long as teachers are comprehensible to learners, they have fulfilled their role.

"I will frown very much at the university lecturer who measures [the] oral proficiency of a student-teacher. I will understand their content knowledge being measured as a developmental tool… or maybe volume, maybe the child at the end of the class can't hear you… I know there's no need for me to put them through that fear, that stress of measuring their language." (A0007)

Participant A0010 strongly disagreed with the use of standardised assessment protocols. They argue that proficiency in language does not necessarily correlate with teaching ability and emphasise the importance of considering students' home languages and contexts in the assessment process.

I disagree with it completely. Oh yeah no, I think because you know what, you get people who are not that good at language, but they are brilliant teachers. the little mistakes that they make or that other people may scrutinise is not something that's really a barrier to education. Then you get people who are excellent in English, but they suck at teaching. They absolutely suck. (A0010)

When I asked Participant A0001 about language endorsement at his institution he made the following remark:

I must say that I'm not too strict when it comes to not giving them the endorsement. Because myself, I myself have experienced that although I might have been less confident, it is something that can improve with practice and exposure. So I don't think we must just say well somebody can't teach because their English is not good. If they are placed in a situation and they need to, they will learn.

Overall, the participant's response reflects a more lenient approach to assessing oral proficiency and indicates a belief in the potential for improvement through practice and

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exposure. They emphasise the importance of considering other factors beyond language skills when evaluating someone's ability to teach effectively.

From their responses, it is clear that participants either felt that using an assessment protocol that gauges the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers would be unfair and might even be considered offensive by some people. Furthermore, the inequality in education means that many people in South Africa cannot express themselves adequately in English. One participant (A0007) felt that penalising people based on their language use would place the majority of pre-service teachers at a disadvantage. Additionally, participants argued that it could also discourage good and compassionate teachers from entering a career where they could make a difference.

Advantages of assessing oral proficiency

Other participants felt that education as a career should have higher standards for what constitutes a good teacher and that it would be advantageous if pre-service teachers were assessed on their oral proficiency. This would enable lecturers to identify students who need additional support and then set up programmes that could improve their oral proficiency.

> *"I think that it is not a bad thing to assess it (oral proficiency) because we*
> *need good teachers and if (as a lecturer) I'm going to produce a bad teacher*
> *or a teacher that is not proficient enough to communicate with students…*
> *then the system is going to be failing"* (A0008)

Participant A0001 expresses a balanced perspective on standardised assessments arguing that standardised tests should complement and support the assessor's judgment rather than replace it entirely:

> *"I think a standardised assessment is important as it sets a benchmark. But*
> *I don't think it should overrule the judgement of the assessor"* (A0001)

Another participant elaborated on this when he argued that the benefit of a standardised assessment protocol is that it is easy to implement, but that the assessor has to continuously evaluate the assessment protocol to make sure it is up to standard; context orientated and measures objectively. This was supported by another lecturer

who stated that assessment is all about *"addressing, adapting and negotiating"* *(A0008)*

Refining standardised assessment of oral proficiency

Another participant (A0009) supported assessment protocols but argued that an assessment protocol should evaluate pre-service teachers holistically and not just based on their language ability. This participant believes that assessments should go beyond linguistic modes and incorporate multimodal forms of expression, allowing students to demonstrate their understanding in various ways based on their learning preferences. She states that:

> *If within that assessment, they have an opportunity to express themselves in a modality in which they feel confident, then I think it is fair…For instance, in a more visual way, for instance, by drawing something in the form of a drawing or in the form of a more graphic, a graphic design, or in the form of a painting. Students that are more musically inclined, or orally inclined, should be allowed the opportunity for instance, to compose a song or an opera or to sing their understanding of a specific concept and other learners are more kinaesthetic, they like movement, they, they should then be provided with an opportunity to design their own play, in which they illustrate their understanding of the concept. (A0009)*

Many participants stressed that just because a teacher does not speak English well does not make them a bad teacher, suggesting that some teacher educators might be accepting of poor oral expression.

> *"We always have to remember we are working with normal people and a teacher who is not that proficient in English will be more efficient in a school where the learners are not proficient in English" (A0010)*

Participants A0001 and A0005 support an assessment protocol for evaluating oral proficiency but stress the importance of assessors using the assessment wisely, having personal interaction with the teacher being assessed, regularly evaluating, and updating assessment criteria, and considering a diverse sample and clear criteria in the development of standardised assessments.

Overall, the responses indicate a range of perspectives on standardised assessment protocols for assessing the oral proficiency of teachers. Some participants see value in setting benchmarks and using standardised measures, while others express concerns about fairness, cultural and linguistic diversity, and the potential limitations of such protocols.

4.2.5.2   Effective approaches for assessing oral proficiency

I also asked participants to describe some of the strategies they used to evaluate a pre-service teacher's oral proficiency.
Contrary to policy, one participant (A0007) was opposed to measuring oral proficiency, emphasising teachers' fallback languages and unnecessary fear and stress.

> *I have never needed to. I will frown very much at a university lecturer who measures are our proficiency of student teacher… My reason for doing that or saying that is, remember, I keep on emphasising even in the English classroom. The teacher still has so many languages to use if they get stuck with language. So I know there's no need for me to put them through that fear that stress of measuring their language. You know, I don't know, I would not be able to do that.*

A few participants were able to share some of the assessment strategies used at their institution. Assessment of oral proficiency seemed to be part of specific modules. Lecturers did not assess oral proficiency in their specialised modules but acknowledge that they do look at language when they assess written assignments. Participants A0002 and A0003 mention informal assessments of language proficiency through the marking of assignments.

> *I've never, I've never had to, I've never had occasion to formally assess language proficiency. My proficiency evaluations have always been informally. So it's been in the marking of assignments, for example, I can see, or I can express a pretty accurate guess as to what the home language of the student writing the assignment is. (A0002)*

> *You know in a classroom situation I don't assess oral language. In a written situation I do assess written English. (A0003)*

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Several participants reported that as part of their degree requirements, pre-service teachers must receive a language endorsement at the end of their fourth year Participant A0001 described how pre-service teachers are expected to present a prepared presentation in their final year, and they are then assessed using a rubric.

> *…basically [we] decide whether they are able to teach in English. And we use a rubric where we ask them to come and present a prepared presentation, but we also question them and see if they can respond at that specific point in time. (A0001)*

This type of assessment is mirrored at Participant A0003's institution during the pre-service teacher's work-integrated learning. Students give a lesson and receive feedback on their language use as part of a broader rubric that includes communication skills.

> *We have to go on work-integrated learning. You will say to them… you will listen to them; they will give you a lesson and you will comment on their language. Yeah you… you have a rubric. Often the rubric will… yeah that's no. But the rubric there's one little point in the whole rubric that's about language use. Well it's not even language use, it's communication skills. So it's a whole lot together, one little mark.*

However, he concedes that the section of this rubric devoted to assessing communication is very limited.

Participant A0004 describes an assessment protocol used at her university. Students who do not achieve 70% for their combined modules at the end of their fourth year must write a language endorsement test that combines a comprehension, an oral and a writing assignment. Their performance in this test will then determine whether they need additional support or not. Participant A0009 described an interesting technique used to assess communication skills in the form of a group presentation of a short story. Pre-service teachers each received an opportunity to talk for two-three minutes. During this presentation, the lecturer assesses content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and oral proficiency. She will specifically look at tone, projection, body language, posture, and eye contact using a scaled rubric. However, she also explains how assessing large groups and conducting assessments online during the COVID-19 lockdown presented challenges. During these group presentations, the lecturers will assess various communicative skills:

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But then also very importantly, for instance, their voice projection, their nonverbals communication skills like tone, and pitch. For teachers, this is very important because they have to, their voice is actually their major tool, of teaching, of reaching the learners in the classroom. So it has to do with pitch, the voice, the voice projection, body language, eye contact and posture and so I have specifically those rubrics in order to assess. (A0009)

Another participant (A0010) describes how she uses her own videos of lectures to show students how they need to communicate and how they need to control their body language. In addition, her students also complete a course that teaches them how to modulate their voices using tone, pitch, and projection. After receiving this training, the students then make a video of themselves presenting a lesson or communicating in a teaching environment and the lecturer uses this to provide feedback. The participant noted that when students are allowed to prepare lessons in advance their oral proficiency is much better. However, as soon as they do not prepare properly their speech patterns fall are stilted and they start relying on unintentional code-switching.

Overall, the approaches to assessing oral proficiency differed among the participants, reflecting the diversity of strategies employed in evaluating pre-service teachers' language skills.

4.2.5.3   Criteria for assessment protocol

I asked the participants to provide me with some criteria that they thought would be crucial to measuring the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers. Although three participants did not approve of a standardised assessment protocol several participants did provide me with helpful insight based on their experience of teaching pre-service teachers. I made a summary of these criteria using a template on Canva. Based on the responses provided by the participants, the following criteria can be considered important for measuring the oral language proficiency specifically of South African teachers:

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Criteria for assessing oral proficiency

Clarity

01

The ability to clearly convey messages and ensure that they are understood by the audience. (A0001 & A0004)

Accuracy

02

Using the right words and grammar to express ideas without errors or inconsistencies. (A0001, A0002 & A0004)

Complexity

03

Possessing a wide range of appropriate and sophisticated vocabulary and familiarity with the subject-specific jargon and academic language. Able to express it accurately in English. (A0001, A0002, A0003 & A0010)

Fluency

04

Having a level of pronunciation and articulation that does not hinder comprehension, although it does not need to be native-like. (A0001)

Use of idiomatic language

05

Demonstrating proficiency in using idiomatic expressions and common phrases in English.

Classroom communication

06

Focusing on effective communication within the classroom, which includes verbal, and non-verbal, modes of communication. (A0003 & A0007)

Paralinguistic skills

07

Assessing the teacher's body language, facial expressions and gestures and its alignment with communication emphasising open and approachable communication. (A0003 & A0010)

Critical language awareness

08

Considering the option of code switching to support learners in multilingual environments Knowledge of translanguaging practices. (A0007, A0008 & A0010)

Figure 4.1 Participants' perceptions regarding criteria for oral proficiency assessment

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Participants also identified several criteria that, while not directly related to oral proficiency, they believed are important for instructional communication.

- **Adaptability**: Being flexible and capable of adjusting teaching strategies to cater to different situations and student needs.
- **Background and Context:** Considering the historical background and language context of the teacher, including their first language and language proficiency.
- **Multimodal Expression:** Allowing teachers to express their understanding and knowledge through various modalities, such as visual arts, music, or movement, in addition to linguistic modes.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Recognising the need for ongoing English proficiency development and providing support and interventions for improvement.

It is important to note that these criteria are based on the participants' opinions and may not represent an exhaustive list. The specific criteria to be used for measuring oral language proficiency among South African teachers would require further discussion and consensus among relevant stakeholders.

Participant A0005 discusses the design of assessment protocols for oral proficiency. They mention qualitative approaches using rubrics with clear assessment and measurement criteria, as well as quantitative approaches that involve counting errors or developing a scale for proficiency. He argues that one of the first criteria the researcher must determine is whether he/she wants an assessment protocol to be quantitative or qualitative. According to him, a qualitative assessment protocol would be a rubric with level descriptors, which has a clear description labelled for each criterion and level. A quantitative assessment protocol would be a test that measures how many errors are made per minute. This could also be measured according to a scale. He also suggested that such an assessment protocol must be tested multiple times across different populations to improve reliability. Another participant argued that people communicate in different ways, some using pictures for example and that *multimodal forms of expression* must also be considered when designing a rubric.

In conclusion, the participants provided me with a dynamic picture of their perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach, as well as a comprehensive list of criteria which could be considered key when assessing this oral proficiency. In the next section of this chapter, I discuss my findings as they relate to the assessment of oral proficiency, Classroom English and the steps that can be taken to improve the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers.

4.3   Discussion of findings

In this section, I will attempt to provide a comprehensive account of what I have learnt about the perceptions of lecturers regarding the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers as well as the criteria they consider key in the assessment thereof. Three main areas of concern were identified:

- The importance of oral proficiency in the education domain

- Diverse attitudes towards pre-service teachers' oral proficiency

- The exploring of proposed criteria for oral proficiency assessment

4.3.1   The importance of oral proficiency in the education domain

Through my initial inquiries, I sought to assess the participants' perspectives on the significance of oral proficiency as a crucial skill for pre-service teachers, particularly considering that the participants revealed that a limited number of their students are native English speakers. The consensus among the majority of participants was resoundingly in favour of recognising oral proficiency as an essential and highly valued skill. The participants emphasised the significance of oral proficiency by identifying multiple compelling reasons for its importance. I unpack them here:

- Oral proficiency enables teachers to effectively convey information, instructions, and ideas to their students, promoting a productive learning environment where concepts are understood and discussed.

- Proficiency in oral language skills enables pre-service teachers to comprehend and interpret the nuances of academic and everyday language, allowing them

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to engage with complex subject matter and effectively communicate with students.

- Given the linguistic diversity in South Africa, having strong oral proficiency in a common language, such as English, facilitates effective communication and connection among teachers and students from different language backgrounds.

- Oral proficiency plays a vital role in promoting interdisciplinary learning, allowing teachers to integrate various subjects and facilitate meaningful connections between different areas of study.

- Proficiency in oral language skills fosters a sense of connection and shared understanding among students from diverse cultural backgrounds, promoting inclusivity, respect, and effective collaboration within a multicultural classroom.

- Proficiency in oral English not only equips pre-service teachers with the ability to communicate effectively within South Africa but also provides them with access to global opportunities, including international job markets and collaborations, opening doors to diverse economies and cultural exchanges.

These points highlight the significance of oral proficiency for pre-service teachers and its implications for effective teaching, communication, and intercultural understanding.

Two participants misunderstood the question, assuming that I was talking about advocating for English as the main medium of instruction. This was not the case. Research has shown time and again how important mother tongue instruction is for academic success. However, the debate over mother-tongue instruction versus English-only instruction continues to be significant and many people seem to be divided on the issue. That is why the participants responded this way. This issue was further emphasised by the participant who did not agree that oral proficiency is an important skill for pre-service teachers. She argues that it is sufficient to be able to communicate. She made an example that both she and I are not native English speakers and yet we managed to communicate and understand each other during the interview. While it is true, I contend that the dynamics within a classroom, involving a teacher and multiple learners, are more intricate than those within a one-on-one interview between two adults. A teacher requires an advanced repertoire of skills to navigate this complex environment- ensuring they are heard, understood, and capable of comprehending and responding with precision.

My subsequent task involved discerning the participants' perception of the specific attributes and characteristics associated with oral proficiency. The participants' responses were grouped into three categories: complexity, accuracy, and fluency. The CAF triad is "a standard way of describing the multidimensionality of language performance" (Pallotti, Winke & Brunfaut, 2021: 1). The CAF triad provides requirements for experienced L2 speakers which were reflected in the participants' responses. According to Michel (2017: 3) proficient L2 speakers should be able to:

a. "use a wider range of and more complex grammatical structures and vocabulary;
b. produce more error-free utterances, i.e., they are more accurate; and
c. speak and/or write more fluently, i.e., faster and with fewer instances of silence and repair."

The participants provided similar defining characteristics for oral proficiency. The table below presents the skills identified by the participants for a proficient speaker, along with an analysis of how these skills contribute to effective classroom communication.

Table 4.1 Skills identified for pre-service teachers' oral proficiency

CAF	Skills Identified by Participants for Oral Proficiency	Link with effective classroom communication
Complexity	**Correct vocabulary**: Utilising appropriate and accurate vocabulary adds complexity to oral proficiency as it involves selecting the precise words and expressions that convey intended meanings effectively.	A strong command of **correct vocabulary** enables teachers to communicate with clarity and precision, ensuring that their message is accurately conveyed to learners.
	BICS and CALP: BICS and CALP represent different levels of language proficiency. Navigating between these two levels requires the ability to adapt language use based on the context and audience, adding complexity to oral proficiency.	The ability to navigate between **BICS and CALP** ensures that teachers can communicate with learners across different skillsets, contexts, and language demands.

	Listening comprehension: Understanding spoken language involves various cognitive processes such as decoding, interpreting, and extracting meaning from verbal input. The ability to comprehend complex ideas and nuances enhances the complexity of oral proficiency.	**Listening comprehension** is an important skill for oral proficiency as the teacher needs to be able to understand and interpret learner responses so that she can tailor her instruction and engage learners more effectively.
	Subject-specific vocabulary: Command over subject-specific vocabulary adds complexity to oral proficiency, as it requires knowledge and mastery of specialised terms and concepts related to a particular field or discipline.	The ability to use **complex subject specific vocabulary** equips teachers with the very important skills of delivering content knowledge and convey complex ideas in a way that learners find engaging.
Accuracy	**Communicating ideas accurately** means conveying instructions and feedback with precision, ensuring that the intended message is effectively conveyed to the recipient.	The clear and precise delivery of ideas enables teachers to express their thoughts and information in a clear and precise manner, ensuring that learners receive the intended messages without confusion or ambiguity.
	Correct grammar involves adhering to accurate grammatical rules and sentence structures to ensure clarity, coherence, and understanding in the message conveyed.	Having a command of **correct grammar** allows teachers to maintain language structure, use appropriate sentence construction, and convey information with clarity. This skill helps to ensure effective communication and understanding in the classroom.
	Correct pronunciation focuses on accurately articulating sounds and words in spoken language. It enables effective communication by ensuring that the words and sounds are understood by the listener in the intended manner.	Teachers who **articulate** well can enunciate words and sounds accurately, making their speech understandable to learners. This reduces misunderstandings and facilitates comprehension in the classroom.

	Understandable accent links with pronunciation and involves developing a pronunciation style that is clear and intelligible to others, promoting accurate communication and reducing potential barriers caused by unfamiliar or distorted speech patterns.	Having an **understandable accent** enables teachers to communicate clearly, ensuring that students can easily comprehend their spoken words and instructions; reducing potential language barriers.
	Tailoring Language Use to the Audience involves adapting one's vocabulary, sentence structure, and communication style to suit the intended audience's age group. It ensures accurate and effective communication by considering the recipients' linguistic and cognitive abilities.	Using **age-appropriate language** allows teachers to adapt their vocabulary, tone, and complexity of language to match the developmental level of their learners; enhancing engagement and comprehension, fostering effective classroom communication.
	Send, receive follow-up facilitates accuracy by promoting two-way communication, clarifying misunderstandings, and addressing any potential inaccuracies.	**Active participation and feedback** encourages interaction between learners, addresses learner questions or concerns, and allows for meaningful dialogue and understanding in the classroom.
Fluency	**Smooth and fluid expression**: The skill of using few verbal crutches, such as excessive filler words or repetitive phrases, contributes to fluency in classroom communication.	By minimising these interruptions, teachers can maintain a smooth and uninterrupted flow of speech, enhancing their overall fluency.
	Continuity in speech: Avoiding long pauses due to lack of clarity promotes fluency in classroom communication.	When teachers can express their ideas and instructions without extended breaks, it maintains the continuity of speech and enables a more fluent delivery of information.
	Cohesiveness and rhythm: Consistency in speaking style, pace, and rhythm aids in developing fluency in classroom communication.	When teachers maintain a consistent manner of speaking, students can follow along more easily, resulting in a smoother and more fluent exchange of information.

While the skills identified by the participants were presented separately in the aforementioned table, it is evident that they are interconnected and often overlap with one another. Achieving complexity in classroom communication requires accurate and

precise use of mature vocabulary, subject-specific jargon, grammar, and pronunciation. Similarly, accuracy in conveying ideas and using correct language structures contributes to overall fluency. Fluency, in turn, enhances complexity by allowing for smoother and more natural expression of thoughts and ideas. Thus, these skills are interdependent and work together to shape an individual's overall oral proficiency.

On the one hand, the participants listed characteristics of oral proficiency such as mature vocabulary, good grammar, and pronunciation then on the other hand they said that speakers do not require native-like proficiency. The data showed that many of the participants encouraged a focal shift regarding communicative competence in a South African context. They argued that stakeholders should not focus on achieving native competence in English but rather improve their communication skills, and encourage practices such as multilingualism, code-switching and translanguaging. This makes sense as most of the students in the participant's lecture halls are not native speakers of English, which reflects the language distribution of South Africa as a whole and more specifically the learners sitting in the classrooms. However, a teacher needs an above average oral proficiency in several languages to be able to do this.

It was noteworthy that two participants still viewed the sender, receiver, and follow-up process as an important component of good communication. They specifically spoke about the teacher communicating a message that the learner must understand. My initial research illustrated that there was some criticism regarding this process which, though popular in education and probably not without some merit, was not an effective communication technique in the classroom as it places all of the focus on the teacher as the knower and provides limited opportunities for learners to take part in the lesson.

My research showed that this communication technique has some limitations as it places learners in a passive role. Unfortunately, it is a process which is still widely favoured in South African education. It was clear from my data that these participants still regard this technique as a valuable indication of good communication as many of them frequently said that an indication of good oral proficiency was if the learners understood what the teacher was saying. I would rather argue that a good measure of

communicative competence was if the teacher facilitated discussions that challenged the learners to think critically. Only three other participants pointed this out as well.

I find it worthwhile to also mention that the participants often found it difficult to separate the oral proficiency of teachers from the oral proficiency of their learners. Frequently when I asked them questions about the oral proficiency of teachers, they would refer to learners in their response. This supports my findings in the literature study that stakeholders in the education domain primarily focus on the oral proficiency of learners and rarely on the speaking competence of teachers. Another reason for this confusion which I considered might be that they were referring to learners when speaking about oral proficiency to illustrate the negative effect it might have when a teacher is not a skilled speaker. Though the participants conceded that pre-service teachers do not need native proficiency and that as long as their accent does not affect comprehensibility, they should not be judged for it.

Further probing illustrated a consensus amongst my participants that oral proficiency in English is important for both teachers and learners for practical reasons. This is displayed on the next page by using a Canva template.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ORAL PROFICIENCY

Problem solving	Access	Communication	Connection
• The oral proficiency of the teacher in the LoLT can overcome comprehension issues created by linguistic diversity. • Using a common language like English as a MOI is practical. • Oral proficiency in English can help teachers convey difficult mathematical concepts. • Oral proficiency means the teacher has the necessary CALP to helps address/prevent learning barriers.	• English provides and denies access across various political, academic, social and economic spheres for the learners as well as pre-service teachers. • Good oral proficiency can make you successful in a job interview. • Having a strange accent or poor oral proficiency can be detrimental to your success.	• Must communicate instructions and content effectively to the learners. • Effective communication is about the learners receiving the Intended message. • Ineffective communication leads to ambiguity and comprehension problems. • Communication in education requires subject-specific vocabulary.	• English can transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries inthe classroom. • However, learners must first be fully proficient in their mother-tongue. • Oral proficiency in THE LoLT can negate conflict that occurs as a result of misunderstandings. • When either the teacher or learner is not orally proficient there can be a "break" in the connection. •

Figure 4.2 Practical Implications of Oral Proficiency: A Summary

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With these responses, the participants' perceptions established the practical value of oral proficiency in English in a South African context. Next, I will discuss the participants' perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers.

4.3.2   Diverse attitudes towards pre-service teachers' oral proficiency

Although four of the participants were dissatisfied with the oral proficiency of their students, the majority did not seem worried about the oral proficiency of the pre-service teachers. This being the case although they reported that students struggle with tenses, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. It seems as if most participants were satisfied with a pre-service teachers proficiency if the teacher could just get their message across to the learners in their class and if they were comprehensible. In the area of complexity, three of the ten participants acknowledge that their students struggle with modifying their language to the context and age of the learners. This can cause an array of problems in the classroom:

- Learners may have difficulty understanding and connecting with the teacher's message.
- Learners may become disengaged and lose interest in the lesson. This can lead to reduced participation, diminished attention, and limited understanding of the subject matter.
- Learners may misinterpret instructions, concepts, or expectations, leading to confusion and incorrect learning outcomes.
- Learners may struggle to grasp complex concepts or fail to make connections between ideas.
- Learners who are not able to understand or relate to the language used may be at a disadvantage compared to their peers, leading to unequal access to knowledge and academic success.

In a normal conversation these pre-service teachers might appear to be proficient enough, but should they be informally or formally assessed it would become clear that there are many areas of language with which they struggle. Since two participants also reported that the assessment of oral proficiency is not endorsed by their university, it could very well be the case that these types of errors go unnoticed. The participants' limited awareness of their students' errors may also stem from the fact that they are second language (L2) speakers themselves. Perhaps it is as Kellerman (2017:107) suggests that we subconsciously use a different set of criteria for non-native speakers

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because we expect them to make errors whereas if a native speaker makes a language error it is more noticeable. Although we do not expect the pre-service teachers to have native competence this does not mean that they should speak English so poorly that they become incomprehensible. I had the sense that the participants had a superficial understanding of classroom communication and oral proficiency. Most reported issues with complexity, accuracy, and fluency and yet some felt that this was not an issue. This became clear when they described the pre-service teachers' oral proficiency as "good enough" and "they're not bad". This concern was exacerbated when participants expressed apprehension about a potential shortage of teachers, as they believed that setting excessively high expectations for oral proficiency among pre-service teachers could deter potential candidates from entering the profession. This is not an acceptable compromise. You would not want a mediocre doctor to examine you, why should we have different standards for teachers? Although mother tongue instruction is advocated in South Africa the sad reality is that, for many different reasons, most learners receive education in a language that is not their home language. It is for that reason that teachers should have a high degree of oral proficiency in the LoLT as another skill in their vast repertoire.

The participants argued that there is a cycle of poor oral proficiency in the education domain which can only be broken if teachers receive proper training and education. They also agreed that the government must provide proper support to address this issue. I also received the impression that stakeholders are uncertain about who is responsible to ensure that pre-service teachers are orally proficient before they enter the profession. Is it the DBE, the university, or the language module lecturers? Should this not follow the same protocol as suggested by the LIEP (Language in Education Policy, 2014) All lecturers are language lecturers? One lecturer specifically said that she does not have time to implement revision or intervention to address language barriers. This is understandable as a great deal of content needs to be covered. Would it not be beneficial if policy documents for education made the acquisition of language skills a requirement in every module? I also had the impression that my participants felt that the pre-service teachers' English skills would improve after they completed their qualification and began working as they described it as a skill that should be practised. However, with no guidelines in place at schools, who will monitor this progress?

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It might be possible that lecturers might not have access to the true extent of pre-service teachers' oral proficiency because, according to two participants, students do not get much time during the semester to practice their speaking skills as most assignments focus on writing. Lecturers only formally assess the students a few times a year and only once or twice during practicals. Participants also admitted that most of the students' assignments are in written format. Ironically, pre-service teachers who intend to practice a career where they are mostly expected to talk are largely assessed on their writing ability. During all of these opportunities, the pre-service teacher is usually well-prepared. These types of observed lessons might not reflect their actual teaching practices. Ideally, all teachers would like to prepare lessons where they engage eloquently with all the learners and the lesson is filled with jovial two-way conversations. The reality, as some of my participants mentioned, is that the syllabus does not allow enough time for what some schools would consider "frivolity" and games. As many of my participants mentioned the sad fact is that many academic institutions only focus on assessment and marks and not on developing young minds. Unfortunately, this means that communication in the classroom sometimes takes the back seat and that teachers often fall into linguistic habits of "talk and chalk". Finally, as pointed out by so many of my participants, teachers are so overworked and have so little time that the chances that they will have any intention to improve their language skills in practice are slim to none. Therefore, it is so important that these corrections are made pre-service.

The participants made an interesting argument that pre-service teachers should improve their oral proficiency as it contributes to their professional status and will ensure that parents, colleagues, and learners respect the teacher. However, I want to argue that this should not be the only reason. A pre-service teacher must have good oral proficiency as they set the benchmark and the example for the learners in class. Furthermore, you cannot expect teachers to display such pedagogic skills as translanguaging and cooperative learning strategies as well as such language skills as modulation and intentional code-switching if they cannot speak proper English. I do not dismiss these skills and teaching techniques; I argue that these skills should be taught in conjunction with a good grasp of the English language. The truth of the matter is that even though English is not the home language of South Africans; most of the

educational resources and career opportunities are predominantly only available in English, as two of my participants pointed out. This means that schools and higher education institutions need to prepare their learners and students accordingly. If pre-service teachers are not adequately prepared to use English as a medium of instruction in a professional setting their hands are tied. They are placed at a disadvantage in an already challenging profession. In contrast, providing them with this crucial skill will empower and uplift these pre-service teachers to become exceptional professionals who have the tools to transform this country.

The focus in education should be the quality of the instruction that teachers offer. I believe that for that to occur stakeholders cannot be satisfied with learners just being able to understand what the teacher is saying. It might be the case as some participants stated that these high standards result in many people not considering Education as a profession. Agreeably individuals should not just be disqualified if they do not have the necessary English skills, but I think that by addressing the challenges faced by the educational profession, more skilled professionals will be attracted to the career. Providing guidance for improvement and making pre-service teachers part of their own learning; will nurture the passion which initially draws people to the profession of teaching. Educating teachers on how to use language to facilitate learning in the classroom will be beneficial for both the learners and the teachers.

I had hoped to uncover the participants' perspectives on Classroom English. Unfortunately, when I attempted to question the participants about Classroom English, it became evident that three of them could not separate Classroom English from the subject English and could not describe the concept. The other seven participants provided a reasonably sound description of Classroom English but did not elaborate any further on the topic. It seemed that they had a superficial understanding of the topic. One or two participants hinted at using English to instruct, manage or discipline a classroom but only one lecturer (A0007) seemed well-versed in language theories that are applicable to the South African classroom. This suggests that the concept is not known as widely as it should be and is also not enforced as a communicative technique that pre-service teachers can employ. This is disappointing as Classroom English is a good technique to employ in a multilingual classroom that can support and develop the oral proficiency of learners from BICS to CALP through scaffolding.

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When asked about possible factors which may affect oral proficiency, the participants highlighted confidence as a significant factor contributing to the poor oral proficiency of pre-service teachers. The easiest way that students can improve their speaking skills is by practising them frequently in a classroom setting. Unfortunately, at most institutions, pre-service teachers only participate in work-integrated learning once a year. Participants reported that the students who worked at schools while studying performed far better concerning oral proficiency and confidence. The reason for this is probably because they have the opportunity to practice this skill every day. Participant A0008 even reported that the lack of speaking confidence was probably exacerbated by the students' lack of subject knowledge. Subsequently, students would then resort to 'talk and chalk' as a crutch because it affords them more control. Participant A0001 highlighted that certain students, driven by a desire to communicate effectively and be comprehended, would unconsciously resort to code-switching as a means of making sense. Insufficient classroom engagement and reliance on observation hinder their ability to develop confidence in speaking. This creates a vicious cycle, as the lack of confidence further inhibits their willingness to speak up.

Pre-service teachers are also only assessed on their actual teaching ability and by extension communication skills, once a year. If students were assessed continuously throughout the year this would highlight the areas in which they struggle and provide them with opportunities to receive intervention. Providing more opportunities for practical language use can help enhance oral proficiency among pre-service teachers. Providing students with increased supervised practical experience could potentially enhance their subject knowledge and teaching abilities, as identified by the participants as a critical area for improvement. The participants of my study also mentioned that many students feel embarrassed about their speaking skills which creates a vicious cycle where they do not speak and subsequently do not practice and do not improve. Some were even bullied. What is needed is an environment where students can feel safe to express themselves, be informally assessed frequently and receive suitable intervention. I agree with the participants that students must be encouraged to make mistakes. If lecturers and teachers model behaviour that is less critical and which encourages growth instead of performance, students and learners

will feel less embarrassed. Only assessing practical teaching once a year places too much emphasis on marks and limits learning and growth opportunities.

Participants made an argument that the low standards in schools contribute to a cycle of poor oral proficiency and that there is not much that can be done. Unfortunately, the wide disparity between suburban and rural schools is not a secret but this does not mean that it is acceptable to continue to churn out subpar teachers and then send them back to these institutions to continue the cycle of illiteracy. If we want to "level the playing field" it would be advisable to make sure that every teacher who enters the profession has all of the necessary tools and skills to empower themselves and their learners. The more frequently learners are exposed to grammatically correct English and a rich vocabulary, the more their own skills will improve. Furthermore, universities should offer a wider variety of "catch-up" programs to help those students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their skills. What would also be beneficial is if teachers supported each other in the profession and made the teaching of language everyone's problem and not just the responsibility of the English teacher. It was also noteworthy that assessing oral proficiency did not play a more prominent role in the evaluation criteria at these academic institutions as this is contrary to policy.

The arguments made for and against English as the primary medium of instruction are not new. Participants made sound arguments for both sides, and it remains a problem in South Africa. At least two made the argument that it would be easier to switch to one language of instruction in South Africa as some countries have. It would be easier to instruct children from grade one in English and would probably (if they have good teachers) lay a very good foundation for future study. Furthermore, since almost all the higher education institutions in South Africa for the most part offer tuition in English, this change would be advantageous for learners. However, two other participants made impressive arguments against this policy since that it would undermine people's identities and prevent other languages from being developed. The fact remains that mother tongue education is by far more beneficial. Unfortunately, the reality is that South Africans face numerous challenges in the battle of incorporating the other 9 official languages in the education domain.

The comments that participants made about the negative attitude that many South Africans have towards English were very interesting, as it is a phenomenon I have also noticed in my career. Many of the teachers I have worked with over the years have also refused to speak English or have been so embarrassed about their abilities that they felt too uncomfortable to use English. Unfortunately, it is true that English has a controversial history in South Africa, but I think you would be hard-pressed to find a formerly colonised country that does not have a problematic or volatile language history. The fact that many of these South African perceptions about English are deeply entrenched in ideology makes it difficult to change people's attitudes. Difficult but not impossible.

On the next page, I provide a conceptualisation of an orally proficient pre-service teacher, which I designed using CANVA, based on the perceptions of my participants and my research in the literature review

Figure 4.3 Characteristics of oral proficiency

4.3.3 Exploring essential criteria for oral proficiency assessment

One of the requirements that the MRTEQ document (DHET, 2015: 15) document makes regarding language is that the teacher is proficient in the LoLT. The policy document lacks a clear definition of "proficiency" and fails to provide specific assessment criteria for evaluating proficiency. However, it does emphasise the importance of endorsing teaching qualifications to reflect the holder's level of competence in the Language of Teaching and Learning (LoLT). For this reason, it was noteworthy when I received opposition from three participants regarding the design of a standardised assessment protocol that could be used to establish the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers. It was unclear whether participants opposed this idea because they were cautious about the number of students in South Africa who would not do well if their oral proficiency were assessed. This seemed to be suggested when a few participants mentioned that students would be discouraged from becoming teachers if they were assessed based on their language skills. I think what concerned the participants more was the fact that it would be difficult to design an assessment protocol that would be fair when you consider the fact that South Africa has so many different languages and socio-economic disparities. In a perfect world, it would be fairer if we could assess each individual based on their home language and context. However, language endorsement is advocated by policy and communication is a cornerstone of teaching and learning. Will the delivery of the content be successful if a teacher lacks articulation, makes numerous grammatical errors, and communicates incoherently? Another participant (A0001) expressed a less critical approach towards completing the language endorsement, as he believes that the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers will naturally improve over time with practice. While it is true that language skills can improve through practice, it raises the question of who will serve as role models and mentors for new teachers in developing the necessary language skills once they enter the profession.

Essentially, certain criteria need to be met before an individual can be deemed fit to enter a profession and every profession has a set of standards and requirements which an individual needs to adhere to if they want to practice that profession. This is also the case in the education domain. Some South African pre-service teachers

struggle with oral proficiency in English as the medium of instruction. My study contributes to developing a solution to this problem. Some of the participants offered insightful strategies they employ to evaluate the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers, such as conducting oral assessments during work-integrated learning and organising group presentations where students receive constructive feedback and necessary support.

For my part I proposed the development of an assessment protocol that can be used to evaluate the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers constructively, offering support and assistance to those who do not meet the requirements. Such an assessment protocol would then be formative and not summative. I managed to identify some criteria for such an assessment protocol from the literature review and the data generated from the interviews.

These criteria were divided into four categories:

Complexity	Accuracy	Fluency	Paralinguistic skills
• Subject vocabulary • CALP • Subject-specific vocabulary • Clear communication	• Grammar. • Tenses. • Logical and correct sentence structure. • Articulation • Pronunciation	• Confidence • Limited verbal crutches • Limited pauses	• Tone, pitch, pace, volume, cadence, pauses, • Body language, facial expression and gestures.

Figure 4.4 Criteria for assessing oral proficiency.

Housen and Kuiken (2009), Michel (2017) and Pallotti et al. (2021) provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating the CAF triad in second-language speakers. Pallotti et al. (2021) offer an exhaustive description of complexity specifically focusing on three aspects: lexical complexity, morphological complexity, and syntactic complexity. When assessing lexical complexity, the aim is to determine the variety of lexemes present within a text (Michel, 2017; Pallotti et al., 2021). This involves measuring the diversity, rarity, or range of different words used in the text. A participant

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who employs a broader and more sophisticated vocabulary would demonstrate a higher level of competence. On the other hand assessment of morphological complexity focuses on analysing the different ways in which words are formed or modified through prefixes, suffixes, inflections, or other morphological structures in a given text. Finally, with the measurement of syntactic complexity, the focus is on analysing the level of intricacy or complexity in the arrangement of words and phrases within sentences. The term "depth" refers to the hierarchical structure and complexity of sentence constructions. Pallotti et al. (2021:3) suggest selecting three specific measures to assess syntactic complexity: the average number of words per phrase, the number of phrases per clause, and the number of clauses per higher-order syntactic unit. These measures provide insights into the length and complexity of phrases and clauses, as well as the organisation of multiple clauses within a larger syntactic structure.

In terms of assessing fluency, Pallotti et al. (2021) look at three dimensions, speed, breakdown, and repair. Speed fluency according to Pallotti et al. (2021) refers to articulation rate, specifically the number of syllables per speaking time unit (1 minute) (Michel, 2017). With breakdown fluency the number and duration of pauses (Typically 0.3-0.4 seconds counts as a pause) as well as placement of pauses is significant. Advanced speakers will pause between sentences to conceptualise the next sentence, while lower-level speakers will pause inside during the production of a sentence to search for words. Finally, repair fluency measures the amount of "self-repetitions, reformulations, hesitations, false starts" (Michel, 2017; Pallotti et al., 2021:3) which indicates the speaker's uncertainty and conscious self-monitoring.

Pallotti et al. (2021: 3) state that while complexity and fluency assess the positive aspects of language, meaning the presence of certain language features, accuracy looks at what is missing. According to Pallotti et al., there are various approaches to assessing accuracy. These include calculating the average number of errors per linguistic unit or counting grammatical, lexical, spelling, and appropriateness errors separately. Alternatively, the assessor can consider the impact of errors on comprehensibility, or the complexity of the linguistic structures involved.

By considering these criteria, researchers can gain valuable insights into the linguistic abilities of the participants. However, a drawback of CAF research, as pointed out by Pallotti et al. (2021: 3), is its predominant focus on the formal aspects of language production while overlooking its communicative effectiveness. To address this limitation, it is advisable, especially in a teaching context, for assessors to maintain a holistic view of linguistic communicative competence when utilising the CAF triad to assess oral proficiency. In other words, they should assess to what extent the complexity, accuracy, and fluency of language production contribute to effective communication in the classroom.

One of this study's key outcomes was the development of a self-assessment protocol, which can be refined and expanded upon and used by pre-service teachers to assess their oral proficiency in English. The main function of such an assessment protocol would not be to exclude students who struggle but rather to identify students who are underperforming and develop suitable intervention strategies to help them improve their oral proficiency in English and acquire skills in using Classroom English. In this section, I use the criteria I constructed from my interviews with ten experienced lecturers and the meta-analysis in my literature review, to inform the draft of a self-assessment checklist that could be used by South African pre-service teachers, who use English as a medium of instruction, to gauge their oral proficiency. Kellerman (2017) already designed a rubric with similar applications for her master's dissertation (see Addendum D). However, her rubric used level descriptors which could be difficult and time-consuming for a pre-service teacher to implement I wanted to design an assessment protocol that was easier to use. For that reason, I decided to design a checklist. I also think that a checklist would encourage pre-service teachers to be reflective practitioners.

As an English teacher, I am familiar with using assessment protocols to measure the speaking skills of learners. However, before I started designing my self-assessment checklist for measuring oral proficiency, I first conducted some research on the form and function of assessment protocols at a higher education level. During my literature review, two forms of assessment protocols stood out: the rubric, which is used most often and a checklist, which is used less often. Each of these assessment protocols

has its strengths and limitations. Quinlan (2012:2) describes a rubric as an effective "guideline for scoring a response and the criteria for assessing complicated things…in other words, rubrics help us to make decisions needed to evaluate and assess". This is supported by Wolf and Stevens (2007:3) who state that a "rubric is a multi-purpose scoring guide for assessing student products and performances".

According to Quinlan (2012:8), the benefits of a scoring rubric are diverse as it provides students with expectations of what will be assessed, information on the standards that need to be met as well as detail and direction which a student can use to improve. Rubrics also increase consistency in teacher ratings of performance, products and understanding and provide teachers with data to support grades. The reason for this is that rubrics adhere to the requirements of many educational theories such as constructivism, multiple intelligences, social learning, and behaviourism. All of these theories agree that for learning to occur, students must be actively participating in the process. This is supported by Wolf and Stevens (2007:3) who argue that "rubrics improve teaching, provide feedback to students, contribute to sound assessment, and are an important source of information for program improvement.

On the other hand, researchers (Bachman & Palmer 2010; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010; Fulcher, 2013; Hamp-Lyons & Wenxia, 2019) also identified various limitations of using a rubric to assess speaking skills. These include:

- Not comprehensive enough when it comes to pronunciation and grammar as all variables cannot be listed.
- The subject to the bias of the assessor which leads to inconsistent evaluations.
- Often time-consuming and difficult to use if you are not trained in using assessment rubrics.
- Often the focus is on vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar, and speakers are not assessed on fluency.
- A rubric is often designed for a specific context and can therefore not always be used in other contexts.
- Not suitable for evaluating the complex and changing way people communicate in real life.

Conversely, some researchers (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010; Fulcher, 2010; Luoma, 2004; McNamara, 1996) contend that employing a checklist to evaluate oral proficiency may yield superior results as a checklist could be more consistent and objective, are often easier to understand and time-efficient. A checklist is also an excellent tool to use if you want immediate feedback that illustrates the participants' strengths and limitations. Finally, a checklist can easily be adapted to different contexts. Regrettably, a checklist also presents some limitations that require careful consideration and resolution before a participant can utilise it effectively. The limitation that might be the most challenging is personal bias. We tend to be biased regarding our own aptitudes and skills, a phenomenon which is amplified by mood, motivation, and self-esteem. Participants might rate themselves higher or lower than an objective observer might. The results might also be inaccurate if the participant has limited knowledge of language proficiency. This constraint can be effectively addressed through the adoption of a multi-source evaluation approach akin to the 360-degree feedback model, which encompasses a holistic assessment of an individual's competencies, conduct, and accomplishments (Van Vulpen, 2023). This evaluative framework involves engagement with stakeholders such as colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates to thoroughly evaluate the individual. Within the context of pre-service teaching, a comprehensive evaluation of pre-service teachers' oral proficiency can be achieved by leveraging the self-assessment rubric that I have meticulously developed. This innovative rubric allows peers, instructors, and learners to collectively appraise the pre-service teacher's verbal aptitude, facilitating a well-rounded and equitable evaluation of their speaking prowess.

During my literature review, I evaluated other assessment protocols that have a self-rating component such as FLOSAM, the SPCC and the CEFR. Although the CEFR (2018) is widely used and includes a self-rating component that is easy, the use of the self-rating speaking component is limited as it is part of a larger assessment rubric which assesses language proficiency as a whole. In other words, it might fail to accurately assess the nuances and complexities of oral proficiency. The FLOSAM (Bachman & Palmer, 2010) is quite comprehensive but might be difficult for a novice to use as it consists of level descriptors which are complex and specific. A teacher will first have to receive training to use this protocol. Finally, the SPCC (McCroskey, J. &

McCroskey, L., 1988) was promising as it reflected my initial idea for a scaled self-assessment checklist. It's a way for people to rate how confident they feel about their ability to communicate with others. They are provided with communication scenarios and must they give themselves a score from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest score. This is an excellent tool that an individual can use to think about their communicative competence and how they can improve their skills. The only obstacle I identified with McCroskey's SPCC was the number of mathematical operations an individual has to conduct to calculate their final score.

Wolf and Stevens (2007: 6-7) identified three steps in designing a reliable rubric which I decided to adapt to create a draft of a scaled self-assessment checklist. The first step is identifying the performance criteria in other words what is the learning outcome. Identifying four to six observable and measurable criteria seems best as it is easier to manage and does not overwhelm the assessor. For the purpose of my assessment protocol, I combined the criteria I identified through my data analysis and literature review. The second step is setting the performance levels. In this case, I decided on using a scale from 1-5, for each criterion, with five being the highest mark. The primary purpose of my assessment protocol is formative and intended to provide a comprehensive picture of the pre-service teachers' own oral proficiency so that they can identify areas of improvement. Finally, it is beneficial to describe each performance criterion in the matrix as this makes it easier for the assessor to apply the rubric. Wolf and Stevens argue that the rubric designer can also define each level descriptor to refine the protocol. However, I decided against this as I wanted an assessment protocol that is easier to use, and which would not take too much time to assess. For that purpose, I composed twenty simple sentences starting with I can… Alternatively, teachers can use the assessment checklist to conduct peer assessment as was conducted with learners in Ghahari and Farokhnia's successful 2018 study.

During the design process of this self-assessment checklist for pre-service teachers to evaluate their own oral proficiency, I had to remain mindful of various factors pertaining to bias, reliability, and validity. When considering the reliability and validity of assessing the CAF triad, Pallotti et al. (2021: 1) emphasises that reliability refers to the consistency or stability of the assessment measure when used by different evaluators. This is determined by examining whether multiple evaluators obtain similar

results when using the measure (Mead, 1980: 2). To enhance the reliability of the self-assessment checklist, careful consideration was given to factors such as maintaining consistency in rating criteria and providing clear instructions for completing the assessment. Additionally, specific descriptors or indicators were included for each proficiency level to facilitate teachers' self-evaluation process. As suggested by Brown and Abeywickrama (2004:40), the inclusion of multiple items or indicators assessing similar aspects of oral proficiency can also contribute to increased reliability. This helps ensure that the assessment is reliable and produces consistent outcomes. On the other hand, validity relates to the extent to which the assessment measure accurately captures and aligns with the intended construct being measured (Pallotti, 2021:1). It focuses on the logical alignment between the assessment measure and the underlying concept or construct it aims to assess. Validity ensures that the assessment is meaningful and measures what it intends to measure. To enhance the validity of this assessment, it is crucial to follow the recommendations outlined by Brown and Abeywickrama (2004:40) for language assessment. Firstly, the checklist items should be aligned with established proficiency frameworks or standards to ensure consistency and relevance. Secondly, seeking the input of experts in the field of oral proficiency or conducting a pilot study can provide valuable evidence supporting the validity of the checklist. Furthermore, clear guidelines and illustrative examples should be provided to assist teachers in accurately understanding and interpreting the checklist items.

Finally, self-assessment inherently carries the risk of bias, as individuals may tend to overestimate or underestimate their own abilities. Teachers may be inclined to rate themselves higher or lower based on their self-perception or other subjective factors. It's important to be aware of this potential bias and encourage teachers to provide honest and reflective self-assessments. My hope is that future researchers might be able to adapt and implement this assessment protocol or that teachers can use it to assess their oral proficiency and address the barriers they identify. The draft of this self-assessment scaled checklist is presented on the next page.

Scaled self-assessment checklist for measuring the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers.

Please read each statement in the checklist section and assess the frequency with which it applies to you. Assign yourself a score ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Never" and 5 represents "Very often." Calculate your total score out of 90 and convert it to a percentage. Refer to the score index below to determine your mark out of 100. If your score falls below 60%, it is advisable to consider implementing intervention strategies.

Skill	Criteria	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Very often
Complexity	I use complex language and sentence patterns.					
	I am able to convey nuanced ideas and concepts.					
	I can incorporate a variety of vocabulary and expressions in my speech.					
	I demonstrate critical thinking and elaboration when I talk.					
	I can effectively use rhetorical devices to enhance communication.					
	I have knowledge of subject-specific vocabulary and know how to use it.					
	I understand and can utilise academic language registers.					
Accuracy	I demonstrate a mastery of grammatical rules and structures when I talk.					
	I construct sentences that adhere to logical and syntactic rules.					
	I can modulate my speech patterns according to my audience.					
	I am articulate when I speak.					
	I have accurate pronunciation.					
Fluenc	I am self-assured and at ease when I express myself.					

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	I rely minimally on verbal crutches (fillers, repetitions, or hesitations)					
	I speak with a smooth and natural flow of speech without long pauses.					
Paralinguistic features	I use tone, pitch, pace, volume, and cadence appropriately to convey intended meanings and emotions.					
	I use pauses strategically for emphasis and clarity.					
	I use nonverbal communication like body language, facial expression, and gestures effectively to enhance the message.					

0-20%	Not achieved
30-40%	Needs assistance
50-60%	Adequate
70-80%	Proficient
90-100%	Advanced

Figure 4.5: Scaled self-assessment checklist for measuring the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers.

In this section, I provided a discussion of the data I collected. It is clear from this discussion that oral proficiency in a South African context is a complex multi-layered issue that touches on many sensitive topics. It would be meaningful to conduct further research in this area and to focus on the development of these skills at a pre-service level. In the following section, I will synthesise the data and present my comprehensive findings regarding the lecturers' perceptions of the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach.

4.4 Data synthesis

The primary purpose of my study was to explore the perceptions of lecturers regarding the oral proficiency required by pre-service teachers to teach effectively. I attempted to find answers to two questions:

To address this issue, the following primary research question had to be answered:

- How do teacher educators perceive the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach?

Only after answering the primary question could, I address the secondary question, which was:

- What criteria ought to be considered as key when assessing the oral proficiency of South African teachers who use English?

Within the framework of my theoretical construct, I drew upon McCroskey et al.'s (2004) General Model of Instructional Communication as a foundation. I initially delineated my intent to concentrate solely on three fundamental dimensions within this model—contextual factors, source factors, and message factors. However, as the research progressed, an unforeseen yet pivotal fourth factor emerged: the [lecturers'] perceptions of the teacher's verbal and non-verbal dynamics. The lecturers' detailed responses to my interview questions provided a comprehensive picture of their experience-based perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers that they have taught. Essentially this study showed that some of the lecturers perceived that their students, still face many challenges (contextual factors) when it comes to the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers (source factors) who use English to teach(medium factors). Some of these challenges include but are not limited to:

1. The participants observed that many pre-service teachers faced challenges in oral proficiency due to a lack of strong English language skills developed during their earlier education.

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2. Participants noted that pre-service teachers often struggled with grammar rules and had limited vocabulary, which hindered their ability to communicate effectively in English.

3. CALP, which involves the use of advanced academic language skills, was identified as an area of weakness among pre-service teachers. They lacked the ability to comprehend and use complex language in academic contexts. The underpinning of my theoretical framework, as previously articulated, emphasised that CALP traditionally pertains to learners' oral proficiency, as opposed to the oral proficiency of educators. Hence, this study effectively bridges an existing research void by forging a linkage between Cummins' theory of CALP and the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers, thereby extending the theoretical landscape.

4. Limited exposure to correct English in the pre-service teachers' environments was seen as a significant challenge. Pre-service teachers had limited opportunities to practice and engage with English, leading to difficulties in developing their oral proficiency.

5. Participants reported that pre-service teachers showed limited awareness of the importance of language proficiency for effective teaching and learning. They did not fully recognise the impact of their own language skills on classroom communication and student engagement.

6. Participants noted that disparities in the education system, including unequal access to quality education, contributed to challenges in oral proficiency among pre-service teachers. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds faced additional obstacles in developing their language skills.

7. The inequalities between schools in South Africa, such as varying resources and support systems, were seen as contributing factors to the oral proficiency challenges faced by pre-service teachers.

8. The time constraints within teacher education programs were identified as a challenge. Participants felt that the limited duration of these programs did not allow sufficient time for pre-service teachers to develop and improve their oral proficiency adequately.

There are obviously many factors that influence the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers and I have mentioned a few in this chapter but further investigation did not

fall within the scope of my study. Despite these challenges, seven of the participants were hopeful regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers in English in the education domain. However, it remains clear that South African pre-service teachers still require a great deal of support when it comes to oral proficiency in English.

The participants were reluctant to outline the exact level of oral proficiency required by pre-service teachers to teach effectively. This is understandable as it is a sensitive topic. However, language endorsement is an important component of a teacher's qualification and affects the type of career opportunities they will have access to. The participants did manage to describe a set of characteristics that they deemed necessary for a pre-service teacher to be orally proficient. These characteristics were conceptualised on page 132 and include the following:

- Complexity
- Accuracy
- Fluency
- Critical language awareness
- Rich vocabulary
- Cognitive academic language proficiency

Finally, although five of the participants were not in favour of a standardised assessment protocol for the assessment of pre-service teachers' oral proficiency, they did offer some suggestions for possible criteria. The participants who opposed such an assessment protocol were mainly concerned that teachers might be penalised as a result of their oral proficiency in English. This is not the case and is also one of the reasons why I suggested a self-assessment rubric as this would greatly improve a teacher's critical language awareness and metacognitive skills. I explore this topic in the next chapter. The criteria I identified during my data analysis which are key to the assessment of pre-service teachers' oral proficiency in English as LOLT were divided into four categories:

- Complexity
- Accuracy

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- Fluency
- Paralinguistic skills

Although I managed to gain insight regarding my research topic and questions. There were some areas where my curiosity was not satisfied, I held a keen interest in delving deeper into the utilisation of Classroom English among South African pre-service teachers, as expounded upon within my theoretical framework. Acknowledged as a resourceful and potent instrument, Classroom English bestows teachers with the means to ingeniously instruct, foster communication, and structure their classroom environment. The somewhat limited familiarity displayed by some of the participants with this concept signifies a larger concern – a significant portion of pre-service teachers remain unacquainted with this invaluable tool as well. I also wish that I had the opportunity to ask the students about their perceptions regarding their own oral proficiency, but I look forward to collaborating with other researchers on this topic, in the future.

In conclusion, I have presented an integrated data set as well as a comprehensive analysis. The perceptions of lecturers on the oral proficiency required for pre-service teachers to teach effectively were systematically presented, analysed, and synthesised based on the order of interview questions. Through this process, the findings provide insights into the elements comprising oral proficiency, criteria for measuring oral proficiency and expectations in teacher education and training, which can inform the development of effective language proficiency assessment and improvement strategies for pre-service teachers.

5. Chapter 5: Significance and implications of the study

5.1   Introduction

"Without a high level of linguistic security in the instructional language teachers cannot adequately develop their learners' basic communicative skills nor their cognitive ability in that language." -Evans and Cleghorn (2010a: 37)

There are many skills that pre-service teachers need to acquire to teach effectively. However, in South Africa where language is already a complex situation, teachers must be proficient in the medium of instruction to prevent miscommunication in the classroom and to interpret and transfer the curriculum successfully. The main aim of this study was to explore the perceptions that lecturers have of the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach. In this chapter, I summarise the study and discuss the importance thereof as well as the implications it has for educational policy and practice. In conclusion, I will provide a personal reflection and recommendations for further research in the field of oral proficiency of pre-service teachers.

5.2   Overview of study

The purpose of this study was two-fold. In this study, I examined lecturers' perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach. Secondly, I aimed to investigate the criteria that ought to be considered key when assessing the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English as a medium of instruction to the development of teachers. I presented my research in five chapters.

Chapter 1 provided a contextual background for my research by examining the complexity of language in South Africa. This provided a framework from which I could explore the complex nature of oral proficiency in English as an LOLT as it exists in the South African classroom. In this chapter, I also described how my own experiences as a second language teacher at a disadvantaged school sparked my interest in the oral proficiency of South African teachers. The two research questions that were used to

guide this inquiry are: *How do teacher educators perceive the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach?* and *What criteria ought to be considered as key when assessing the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers who use English?* Chapter 1 also briefly discussed my qualitative methodology and case study research design. I also described my data generation process, research site and participants as well as how the data would be analysed. I provided a discussion of ethical issues and anticipated constraints. In Chapter 1, I also outlined the scope and boundaries of my research within the context of the COVID pandemic.

In Chapter 2, I described the extensive literature review I conducted on oral proficiency where English is used as a medium of instruction. The purpose of this literature review was to identify gaps in the research regarding the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers. I started my literature review with research that guided the formation of my theoretical framework and conceptual framework. The second part of this chapter sketches an overview of the issues faced regarding instructional discourse at an international level and in the South African context. Thereafter, I discussed why good oral proficiency is essential in the education sector. Finally, in this chapter, I also examined existing assessment protocols and criteria for measuring proficiency in English which I would then use in conjunction with my generated data to design an assessment protocol that could be used to gauge the oral proficiency of South African teachers.

Chapter 3 provides further clarity on the research design and methodology used in this research study. I discussed the constructivist paradigm which is the lens that I use to generate my research and I also discussed the reason I chose to use a qualitative case study research design. In this chapter, I also justified my use of virtual research sites and provided a profile of my participants and how they were selected using purposeful sampling techniques. I elaborated on the data generation tool in the form of voice recordings of semi-structured interviews. This was followed by a detailed description of permissions required for the study, how I analysed my data and how I ensured the trustworthiness of the data.

Chapter 4 presented the data which described the perceptions that lecturers had regarding the oral proficiency required by pre-service teachers to teach effectively. This chapter also discussed my findings which show that pre-service teachers do

experience challenges when it comes to oral proficiency and do not have the necessary oral proficiency to teach effectively. The results indicated that the key aspects of effective communication encompassed accuracy, which pertains to the correct usage of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Fluency, including elements like speed and appropriate pauses, was also identified as an important component. Additionally, the complexity of expression was recognised as a significant dimension of communicative adequacy. In this chapter, I also uncovered criteria that I used develop a preliminary self-assessment protocol that could be used to gauge the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English as LOLT. I described this assessment protocol in Chapter 4. On the following page, I present a visual representation (designed with a Canva template) of my research trajectory through a space exodus metaphor. Drawing inspiration from my enduring fascination with space, this illustration aptly captures the transformative journey I have embarked upon as a researcher. The choice to depict my master's degree journey as a spaceship on a journey symbolises the transformative and exploratory nature of the research process. It represents the researcher's aspiration for growth, discovery, and pushing the boundaries of knowledge.
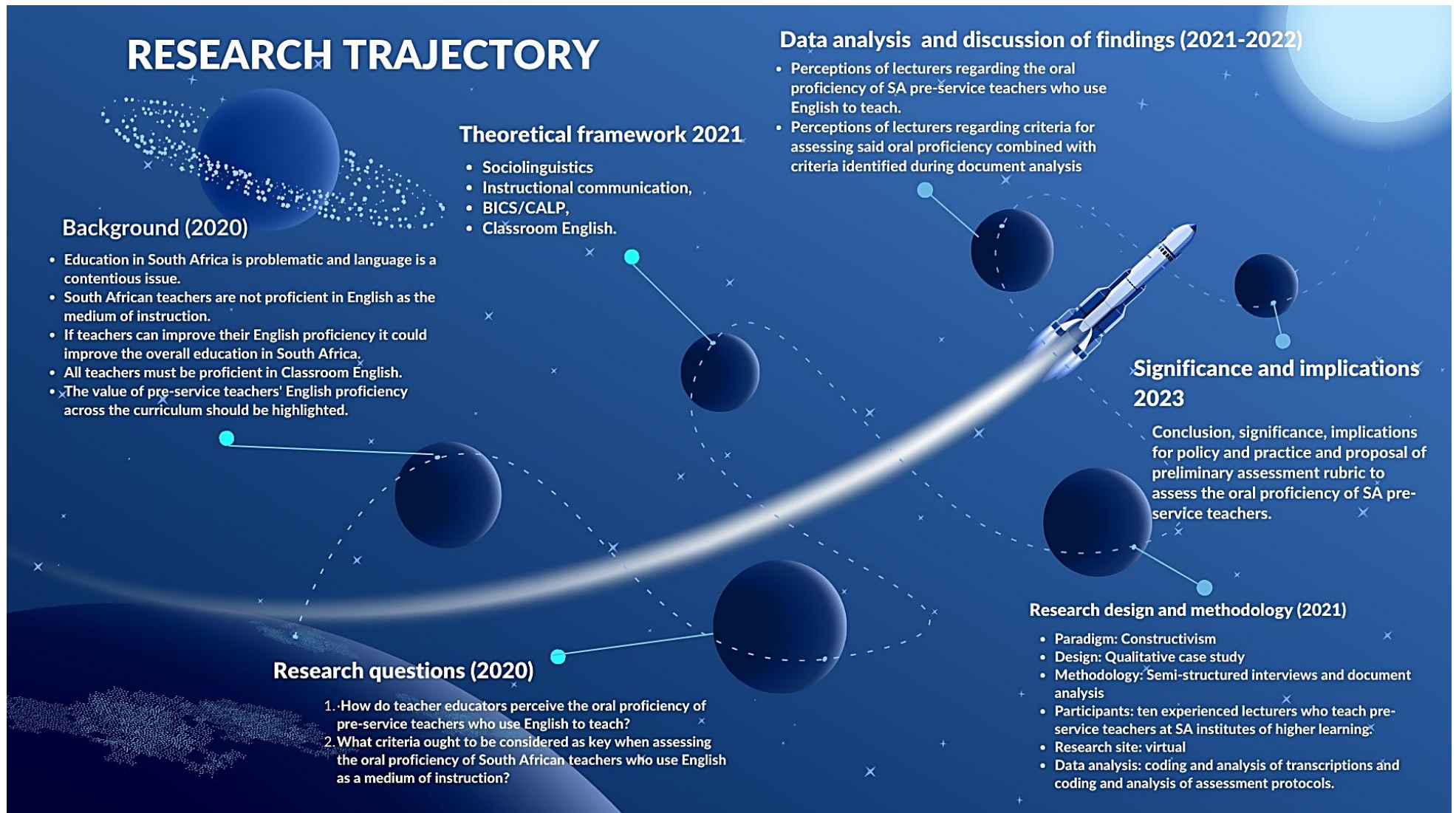
Figure 5.1 The trajectory of my research journey (Canva template)

5.3   Limitations

In this section, I discuss the limitations of my study.

The COVID-19 pandemic created several constraints for researchers. As a result of the lockdown measures put in place in South Africa, I was not able to observe teachers or pre-service teachers in a physical classroom, and this meant that I had to change the initial focus of my study. Another limitation of the study was time. The analysis and transcription of semi-structured online interviews take a lot of effort and time, as it must be completed carefully. For this purpose, my supervisor hired a specialist to help me transcribe my data. However, the data analysis, which I did by hand, took a long time. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I was unable to schedule a follow-up interview to further explore the self-assessment protocol as originally intended. I also encountered some personal issues that affected my studies. I became pregnant in the middle of my research. Caring for a new baby was very time-consuming and placed a lot of pressure on me. Finally, in the last year of my studies, I developed post-partum depression which affected my ability to work on my research. Luckily, I received treatment, persevered, and finished.

Regarding the participants, I initially aimed to recruit participants for my study online by using an advertisement posted on the SAALT's website. Unfortunately, I received limited responses. As a result, I decided to use a combination of purposeful and snowball sampling to select participants. I emailed the participants who fit my criteria, as described in Chapter 3, and who indicated that they were interested in my study and asked them whether they knew any other participants who fit the criteria and would be interested in participating in my study. I received suggestions and then contacted these candidates via email. I managed to enlist ten participants for my study which possibly limited my data. This also limited the scope of my study as I only had one participant who speaks an African language and only two participants who teach subject methodology in science and mathematics. I would have preferred a more diverse group of participants. Part of my argument is that language should be taught across the curriculum, and I would have appreciated more insight into how lecturers who teach other subjects to prospective teachers feel about this. I think it would also

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have been valuable to explore the experiences of more participants who do not speak English as a home language.

In terms of my case study research design, I had some trouble with the interview questions that I used. In retrospect, I felt that I had some repetitive questions. During my interviews, I also discovered that there were some questions that I did not include in my initial structured list of questions. However, for most of the interviews, I was able to include these questions. While analysing the data I also felt that there were opportunities during the interview where I should have delved deeper and asked more probing questions. I think the data construction would have been more successful if I had used a mixed-method research design with additional data-construction techniques, such as a questionnaire, or been able to conduct a follow-up interview. Unfortunately, because of time constraints, this was not possible.

Despite these limitations, my study still produced sufficient data that were richly descriptive by nature and valuable. These data showed an interesting and meaningful perspective of lecturers on the oral proficiency required by South African pre-service teachers, who use English as an LOLT, and helped me to construct a self-assessment checklist that can be used to assess them in the future. Future studies which focus on oral proficiency or assessment thereof can build on my study by addressing these limitations such as using more diverse participants or other data-construction techniques. In the next section, I will expound on the significance of my study.

5.4   Significance of this study

During my literature review, I noticed that there is a dearth of research relating to the oral proficiency of South African teachers who use English as a medium of instruction. Therefore, this study has significance as it contributes to the wealth of knowledge relating to oral proficiency in English as the LoLT in the South African classroom. More specifically this study looks at phenomena from the perspectives of lecturers. Most of the existing research conducted in this area largely focuses on the experiences of teachers. Lecturers are key stakeholders in the developmental process of pre-service teachers, and it cast light on a complex challenge: the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers.

This study also provided me with some insight into some of the teaching styles that lecturers have observed when it comes to using language in the classroom. More

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specifically I gained knowledge about how the English language is used in different subjects by pre-service teachers to facilitate learning.

This study also showed that the education sector in South Africa needs much development and illustrates the many areas of concern that influence the oral proficiency of South African teachers. Furthermore, in Chapter 2, I described some of the existing assessment strategies used to establish oral proficiency globally. This study is significant as it provides insight into some of the local strategies used to assess oral proficiency. I also contributed to the field by using the information I gathered in this study to develop a first draft of a self-assessment protocol in the form of a checklist that can be used by pre-service teachers to assess their oral proficiency. This assessment protocol will be discussed under implications for practice. The information gathered from such an assessment can be used for the further development and education of all teachers in South Africa. In the following section, I discuss the implications of my study for practice and policy.

5.5 Implications

This case study sheds some light on the pertinent communication issues that pre-service teachers face in the South African classroom. As a result of our diverse language map, many of these challenges occur because both the teacher and learners have poor language proficiency. For this reason, stakeholders must implement policies and practices that can attempt to negate these problems.

5.5.1 Implications for DBE and higher academic institutions

My literature review found that policy documents outlining minimum requirements for teacher education and training have insufficient descriptors for teachers' oral proficiency expectations. This is particularly unexpected as many learners are educated in their mother tongue up until grade 3 and then most start receiving instruction in English. One would then expect that these learners have teachers who can speak English well. Unfortunately, that is not the case. These teachers also receive training at universities that do not necessarily emphasise the development of language proficiency. Policy documents on teacher education and training at higher education institutions prioritise requirements other than oral proficiency, as evidenced by my review.

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This study can contribute to the South African Department of Education's policy document for teacher requirements. This study shows that teachers do need to have a certain level of oral proficiency to teach effectively. Furthermore, this study also sheds light on areas of development regarding oral proficiency. The Department of Education can put policies and training opportunities in place that advocate the training of teachers who are already in service, to improve their oral proficiency. This study can also contribute to the development of higher education institutions' policy documents to make room for oral proficiency requirements. I aimed to identify essential criteria for evaluating pre-service teachers' oral proficiency to develop a draft self-assessment checklist that pre-service teachers could use to assess their own oral proficiency. The university can then use these results as part of their formative or summative criteria or to show areas of improvement and then provide the necessary support and intervention where necessary. I discuss the application and implications of this in the next section.

5.5.2   Implications for practice

This study focused on lecturers' perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach. This case study highlights the importance of enhancing the complexity, accuracy, and fluency of oral proficiency among South African pre-service teachers to effectively fulfil their teaching roles. Although few of the participants did not have a positive outlook on an assessment protocol that could establish the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers (I summarised their reasons in Chapter 4), I still felt it could be beneficial. Subsequently, I decided to use the critique, observations, and guidance of my participants collectively along with my extensive research to design a draft self-assessment protocol in the form of a checklist.

Universities put much effort into designing courses that develop students holistically. This process can be streamlined by using this draft self-assessment checklist that South African pre-service teachers can use to assess their own oral proficiency. This assessment protocol will facilitate the development of pre-service teachers' language skills by evaluating oral language skills which they might be struggling with. If pre-service teachers struggle with using English as a medium of instruction, then we can assume that teachers who have been in service for longer might also not have the pre-requisite oral proficiency to use English as a medium of instruction. This means that

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South Africa has many teachers who are ill-equipped to use English in their classrooms to facilitate learning. Subsequently, many learners will be disadvantaged in their education because their teacher cannot speak English adequately for instructional purposes.

What we can learn from this is that both pre-service and in-service teachers- in all subjects- need to develop their oral proficiency in English. This means that universities need to adjust their courses to implement the necessary intervention and stakeholders in the Department of Education and teacher unions need to invest in workshops and training courses that could provide remediation for in-service teachers. I think the focus in universities is often to equip pre-service teachers with the skills and knowledge to only teach their subject and it is wrongly assumed that if they made it to university then the students are proficient enough in English. This study shows that oral proficiency should be an additional skill that universities focus on developing in all pre-service teachers. Furthermore, this skill needs to be purposefully observed in practice in actual South African classrooms.

During my interviews, many participants observed that oral proficiency improves with practice. It was suggested that pre-service teachers just need to practice talking English in an academic setting and then their oral proficiency will improve. The suggestion that I made was that teachers need more practical teaching experience where they present lessons. Currently, it is customary for most universities to only allow pre-service teachers a few weeks a year to experience teaching in practice. Much of this time is spent observing the in-service teacher. At higher education institutions where pre-service teachers are encouraged to begin practice immediately while they are studying, these teachers acquire many teaching and communication skills for the classroom much quicker. These lessons need to be observed by mentor teachers and peers to identify problem areas quickly and encourage the growth and development of the necessary skills. The assessment protocol which I designed to establish oral proficiency can be used in conjunction with other evaluation tools to identify the problem areas and make suggestions for suitable intervention.

My second suggestion would be to encourage all teachers to consider both the learners' and their own language skills when they prepare lessons. Teachers need to understand that according to the LIEP and Policy on the incremental introduction of

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African languages (PIIAL) documents; language must be taught across the curriculum (DBE, 2014 & 2018) and not just in the English classroom. Language and vocabulary can be incorporated in all subjects. Teachers also need to consider the linguistic context of their learners, especially since, for many learners, English is not a mother tongue. South African schools use British English. However, we cannot expect learners to have the skills and proficiency of a native speaker. Therefore, all South African teachers must have critical language awareness regarding multilingualism and acquire the necessary skills to teach second-language speakers. One suggestion made by Kellerman (2017) which I support is that teachers become well-versed in programmes like TESOL.

The purpose of the self-assessment protocol, designed as part of this study, is not just for pre-service teachers to gauge their oral proficiency but also to identify problem areas that need to be addressed. For this to be successful I also recommend that universities start implementing an improved intervention and remediation programme. From my research, it became clear that most universities have some courses targeted at language. One of these focuses primarily on academic writing and the other on language for teaching and learning. Unfortunately, these courses are often just available for an insufficient number of notational hours. My suggestion is that more focus is placed on helping students acquire these important skills by developing a more targeted course that focuses on using English as a LOLT for second language speakers in South Africa. Furthermore, if it is discovered that individuals struggle with oral proficiency, they should be encouraged to attend a remedial/intervention course offered by their institutions that can help them acquire these skills.

In the following section, I will discuss recommendations for further research relating to my study.

5.6   Recommendations for further research

In this section, I make suggestions for possible future research which focuses on similar data. The data I gathered was very informative. However, with a few adjustments made concerning the methodological design, the selection of participants and the tools used I think the data could be more comprehensive.

Regarding the methodological side of my research, I can make a few recommendations as well. Should the interview questions be used for additional research, I recommend that the questions be altered or that questions are added that solicit a more in-depth discussion of the topic. While I was analysing the data, I frequently found myself asking WHY. In other words, I regret not asking my participants for more clarification on some points and found that their responses might have been more comprehensive if the questions in my interview were phrased better. I also think some of the questions were unnecessary in the context of my study which made the interviews longer than anticipated. A future researcher might benefit from testing the questions first on a more diverse pilot audience. Alternatively, I would suggest a follow-up interview which might address some information not covered by the initial interview.

Interviewing lecturers about their experiences regarding my research topic was a new approach to this field of study. However, I also think it would have been beneficial to personally observe pre-service teachers in South African classrooms and add my findings to the data collected from lecturers. This type of data triangulation might have led to more extensive and meaningful data. Unfortunately, with COVID restrictions this was not possible. I think a future researcher might consider using more than one data collection method to improve the findings.

Furthermore, the COVID restrictions also made it impossible to have face-to-face interviews and my ethical application only covered audio recordings. Future research might benefit from having face-to-face interviews and video recordings as the researcher can interpret more information from the participants' responses by viewing body language and facial expressions. Unfortunately, I had to develop most of my analysis on voice recordings only where the focus is on words being used, inflexion and silences. More information can be gleaned from watching a participant.

In the following section, I share my personal reflection on my experiences in completing this research.

5.7   Personal reflection

Before I started this research, I was not mindful of the importance that oral proficiency in English plays in teaching and learning across the curriculum. I thought it was merely

something that was focused on in the English classroom. This research has been very valuable at a personal level as well, as it has changed the way I view the function of language in education and how I use it in my own classroom. What I also found meaningful was how accommodating and forthcoming my participants were and how eager they were to share their experiences. Before constructing this research, I did not understand how valuable one person's insights can be to research and how important it is to be open to learning from other people even if you might not agree with their viewpoint.

This research also improved my understanding of constructivism in education which I used as my theoretical lens for this study. Using this framework helped me understand how various stakeholders in education can contribute to the developing body of research that supports the development of our profession. The information I gathered through my extensive literature review was extremely valuable to my growth as a teacher. This research also challenged some of my own perspectives regarding the South African education domain. I was very surprised when not all my constructed data supported my initial assumptions. I also realised that I have a very pessimistic view of the education sector when in fact there has been much improvement in the last couple of years regarding the language development of pre-service teachers. I am relieved to be at the end of this journey.

This study was one of the most challenging projects I have ever completed, and I am proud of myself for accomplishing it and thankful for everything I have learned. At the start of this project, I was very perfectionistic and scared of criticism. I was often frustrated with my lack of experience and knowledge. Thanks to my supervisor and this study I have learned to adopt a growth mindset and I am no longer fearful of constructive criticism.

5.8   Conclusion

In this dissertation, I discussed my application of a qualitative case study research design to explore the perceptions of lecturers regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach. In this dissertation, I also described how I used the constructed data to develop a draft of a self-assessment protocol that can be used by South African pre-service teachers to gauge their oral proficiency. Through

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interviews conducted with several lecturers at South African higher academic institutions, I determined that oral proficiency in English is still a substantial problem in South Africa since few teachers are native speakers of English. My research also shows that some headway has been made in addressing this issue but that additional support and amendments to policy are required. Furthermore, it is not sufficient for only English teachers to be proficient in the LoLT, all subject teachers must have good oral proficiency in English and be able to use Classroom English. This research has implications for policy developers, stakeholders involved in teacher education and preparation as well as in-service and pre-service teachers. Since education and language remain a challenge in South Africa this issue requires further research, so that we can acquire a better understanding of why South African teachers struggle with English.

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Addenda

Addendum A: Interview schedule

LECTURER VIRTUAL INTERVIEW:

Lecturer perceptions of pre-service teachers' English oral proficiency during instructional communication

Your participation will provide insights into the nature and quality of the oral proficiency of final year South African pre-service teachers who use English when teaching.

The purpose of this interview is to gather information about

- your perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of South African pre-service teachers who use English as a medium of instruction.

- the efficacy of an assessment protocol designed for this study to measure this oral proficiency.

Completing this interview is entirely voluntary. Each participant that is taking part will be provided with an alphanumeric coded number e.g. A001. This will ensure confidentiality of information so collected. Your true identity will not be known to the researcher, or any other party related to this study.

Please take a look at the following questions which will be asked during our virtual interview on either Zoom, WhatsApp, Skype, or Google Hangouts. This interview should not take more than an hour to complete.

Completing this interview implies that you have given informed, voluntary consent to participate in this study. A hard copy can be provided and returned per scan by signing the informed voluntary consent form you received with the information letter regarding this study.

Thank you for considering to participate in this study.

GROUP 1: Lecturers

The purpose of this schedule is to elicit the lecturers' perceptions regarding the oral proficiency that South African teachers, who use Classroom English, need in order to teach effectively. The purpose of this schedule is also to determine what criteria these lecturers think ought to be considered as key when assessing the oral proficiency of South African teachers who use English as a medium of instruction.

Section A: Biographical details

1. Which subject/module/course do you teach?

2. How long have you been a lecturer in this course?

3. Which languages do you speak?

4. How do you feel about teaching your subject in English?

5. How did you learn to speak English?

6. What advice would you give your students to improve their English?

7. Which (oral) teaching methods do you use, during your lectures, to ensure that the students understand the content?

Section B: Perceptions on oral proficiency

1. How important do you think it is to be proficient in English if you are a teacher in South Africa? Elaborate

2. How would you define oral language proficiency?

3. What information does your course include regarding language proficiency?

4. Is there anything you would like to add regarding oral language proficiency?

5. What is the average spoken language distribution of your students?

6. If you had to guess, how many of your students are mother-tongue speakers of English (Home Language)? (most, few, half)

7. Would you say your students are confident when using English to teach their subject?

8. When you consider the use of tense, grammar, and vocabulary, how would you describe the oral language proficiency of your students who use English as a LOLT?

9. How skilled would you say your students are in the use of academic language?

10. Do your students consider English language proficiency as an important skill?

11. Do your students know how to modulate their use of language depending on their audience?

12. Do your students attempt to establish the learners' proficiency levels in English before they start with a lesson?

13. How often do your students attempt to incorporate other indigenous languages in their lessons? (especially if the learners are not mother tongue speakers of English)

14. How familiar would you say your students are with Classroom English?

15. Describe some of the (oral) teaching strategies that you have seen your students use during WIL to facilitate the comprehension of their learners. (repetition, asking questions, defining vocabulary, using pictures to support what they are saying)

16. Do you think proficiency in English is a problem in South African education? Elaborate.

17. Do you think it is important for teachers to have a high proficiency in English? If so, why?

18. What are some of the problem areas that you experience regarding the oral language proficiency of pre-service teachers?

Section C: Assessment of oral proficiency

1. Describe some of the methods you use to evaluate/measure the oral language proficiency of pre-service teachers.

2. Do you agree/disagree with established assessment protocols that you use to evaluate oral language proficiency? Provide a reason for your answer.

3. What criteria do you consider important when designing an assessment protocol to measure the oral language proficiency of South African teachers who use English as a medium of instruction? Elaborate.

4. Which strategies do you use to support students who are not proficient enough in Classroom English to use it as a medium of instruction?

5. Which intervention strategies does your institution offer to students who struggle with the English language?

6. Describe a course or intervention strategy that you think would be suitable to improve the oral language proficiency of students.

Addendum B Informed voluntary consent form.

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

August 2020

PARTICIPANT'S INFORMATION & INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

STUDY TITLE: Lecturer perceptions of pre-service teachers' English oral proficiency during instructional communication

Supervisor: Professor Rinelle Evans

Principal Investigators: Monique Alberts

Institution: University of Pretoria

DAYTIME AND AFTER-HOURS TELEPHONE NUMBER(S):

Daytime number/s: 012 344 3811/ 079 365 9422

Afterhours number: 079 365 9422

DATE AND TIME OF FIRST VIRTUAL INFORMED CONSENT DISCUSSION:

				:
date	month	year		Time

INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Prospective Participant

1)   INTRODUCTION

You are invited to volunteer for a research study. I am doing research for a master's degree in education at the University of Pretoria. This information in this document is to help you to decide if you would like to participate. Before you agree to take part in this study you should fully understand what is involved. If you have any questions, which are not fully explained in this document, do not hesitate to ask the researcher. You should not agree to take part unless you are completely happy about all the procedures involved.

2)   THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study is to gather data regarding my perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English as a medium of instruction. By doing so we wish to develop the linguistic proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English as a medium of instruction.

3)   EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES AND WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED FROM RESPONDENTS.

This study involves completing a virtual interview. The questions structured for the interview will be used to gain an in-depth understanding of your perception regarding the oral language proficiency required by South African educators to teach effectively. Additionally, you will also be asked to suggest suitable criteria that could be used to gauge this proficiency in a South African setting.

4)   POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS INVOLVED

There are no physical or medical risks associated with the study. However, if there is a particular point you do not wish to discuss you are welcome to refuse and then we will move on to the next question.

5)   POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY

Although you may not benefit directly. The study results may help us to improve the assessment protocols used by education faculties in South Africa for pre-service teachers and to provide more insight into the language practices of teachers. In the long run, this will be beneficial to the improvement of South African education.

6)   COMPENSATION

You will not be paid to take part in the study. There are no costs involved for you to be part of the study.

7)   YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Your participation in this trial is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate or stop at any time without stating any reason.

8)   ETHICS APPROVAL

This Protocol was submitted to the Faculty of Humanities Education's Research Ethics Committee, University of Pretoria, telephone numbers 012 420 5639 and written approval has been granted by that committee. The study has been structured in accordance with the University of Pretoria's guidelines on ethics.

9)   INFORMATION

If I have any questions concerning this study, I should contact:

Mrs Monique Alberts

Email: Monique.alberts@ahmp.co.za or cell: **079 365 9422**

10)   CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained during the course of this study will be regarded as confidential. Each participant that is taking part will be provided with an alphanumeric coded number e.g. A001. This will ensure the confidentiality of information so collected. Only the researcher will be able

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to identify you as a participant. Results will be published or presented in such a fashion that participant remain unidentifiable. The hard copies of all your records will be kept in a locked facility at the Faculty of Education, The University of Pretoria.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

PARTICIPANT

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY PERTAINING TO ASSESSMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN TEACHERS' ORAL LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

This is to state that I, _____ a lecturer at _____ have been informed and fully understand the nature and purpose of the research project entitled: *Lecturer perceptions of pre-service teachers' English oral proficiency during instructional communication.* I thus agree to being interviewed online for the study being conducted by Mrs. Monique Alberts.

A.   PURPOSE

I understand that this is not an experimental study and have been informed that the purpose of this study is to gather data regarding my perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English as a medium of instruction. By doing so the researchers wish to develop the linguistic proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English as a medium of instruction. The focus of this study is the lecturer's perceptions regarding the oral proficiency of pre-service teachers who use English to teach and ways in which this proficiency can accurately be assessed.

B   PROCEDURES

I understand that if I have indicated my willingness to participate, I will be asked to complete a virtual interview. The questions structured for the interview will be used to gain an in-depth understanding of your perception regarding the oral language proficiency required by South African educators to teach effectively. Additionally, I understand that I will also be asked to look at an assessment protocol and to suggest suitable criteria that could be used to gauge this proficiency in a South African setting.

C.   CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

* I understand that even though I have agreed to participate I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue their participation at any time without negative consequences or penalty.
* I may do so by informing any of the researchers or their assistants verbally, in writing or by telephone using the contact details provided for this purpose.
* I am at liberty to contact the researchers at any time if I have any questions or concerns about the study.

- I understand that all information gathered about me in this study will be kept confidential.
- I understand that the findings of this study may be disseminated within academic contexts.
- In addition to my general consent to take part in this study, I agree to the audio recording of the virtual interviews _____
- I agree to take part in this study, but I do NOT agree to the audio recording of virtual interviews. _____
- I have carefully studied the above and understand this agreement. I thus freely consent and voluntarily agree to participate in the study as described above.

Name of Lecturer (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Contact number(s): _____

E-mail: _____

Although I have signed, we would still like to know or suggest:

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this the research or have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact any of the research team members. Please retain the contact details listed in the information letter for your own records.

For any complaints concerning the manner in which the research is conducted and you would like to speak to an independent person, please consult the chairperson of the Ethics Committee (Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, or the institutional office) at ethics.education@up.ac.za

SPEAKING: Band Descriptors (public version)

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	• speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar • speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features • develops topics fully and appropriately	• uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics • uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately	• uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately • produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech	• uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety • sustains flexible use of features throughout • is effortless to understand
8	• speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language • develops topics coherently and appropriately	• uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning • uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skilfully, with occasional inaccuracies • uses paraphrase effectively as required	• uses a wide range of structures flexibly • produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors	• uses a wide range of pronunciation features • sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses • is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility
7	• speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence • may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility	• uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics • uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices • uses paraphrase effectively	• uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility • frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist	• shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8
6	• is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately	• has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies • generally paraphrases successfully	• uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility • may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems	• uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control • shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained • can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times
5	• usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self correction and/or slow speech to keep going • may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers • produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems	• manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility • attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success	• produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy • uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems	• shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6
4	• cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction • links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence	• is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice • rarely attempts paraphrase	• produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare • errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding	• uses a limited range of pronunciation features • attempts to control features but lapses are frequent • mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener
3	• speaks with long pauses • has limited ability to link simple sentences • gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message	• uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information • has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics	• attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances • makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions	• shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4
2	• pauses lengthily before most words • little communication possible	• only produces isolated words or memorised utterances	• cannot produce basic sentence forms	• speech is often unintelligible
1	• no communication possible • no rateable language			
0	• does not attend			

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Addendum D Kellerman (2017) Classroom English proficiency rubric

Table 3. 2   Classroom English proficiency rubric

	Level				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Vocabulary	Vocabulary is insufficient for presenting lesson content in English.	Often struggles to find the right word and/or uses words incorrectly, influencing meaning.	Able to express content knowledge and engage learners at a basic level. Occasionally "gets stuck" explaining complex concepts.	Some evidence of academic vocabulary. Speaks fluently and with ease.	Extensive vocabulary is evident, as required for presenting subject content and managing teaching and learning.
Grammatical accuracy	Grammar errors are frequent and significantly influence meaning.	Moving toward accurate grammar use. Meaning is sometimes unclear or ambiguous.	Grammar is accurate more than half the time. The correct meaning can be deduced with little effort.	Grammar is mostly accurate. The few errors that occur do not influence meaning.	Grammar is consistently accurate.
Pronunciation	Difficulty in pronouncing many words clearly, requiring significant effort to understand what is said.	Some effort is required to understand what is said. Pronunciation of a number of words is unclear, influencing meaning at times.	Occasional unclear pronunciation, comprehensible with limited effort. Meaning largely uninfluenced.	What is being said can be understood with very little effort; pronunciation is mostly clear and comprehensible.	Pronunciation is consistently clear and comprehensible.
Language sophistication expressed through engagement of learners	Any encouragement of engagement is at a basic level and does not require cognitive demand of learners.	Brief interactions are occasionally identified, limited to basic question and answer.	Well-phrased questions and extending or meaningful rephrasing of learner answers is occasionally observed. Group work is used.	Meaningful engagement such as asking follow-up questions, extending learners answers, encouraging and answering learner questions. Group work is used and facilitated well.	A range of learner engagement techniques are used and showcase sophisticated language use.

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Language use expressed through teaching techniques	Attempts to help learners understand new vocabulary, encourage interaction, respond meaningfully to learners' questions/answers and/or summarise main ideas are rarely/not observed.	Attempts to help learners understand new vocabulary, encourage interaction, respond meaningfully to learners' questions/answers and/or summarise main ideas are occasionally observed, though negatively influenced by English proficiency.	Attempts to help learners understand new vocabulary, encourage interaction, respond meaningfully to learners' questions/answers and/or summarise main ideas are evident, though hampered somewhat by English proficiency.	Some success is achieved in helping learners understand new vocabulary, encouraging interaction, responding meaningfully to learners' questions/answers and/or summarising main ideas.	Academic language is evident in the teachers' efforts to help learners understand new vocabulary, encourage interaction, respond meaningfully and/or summarise main ideas.
Expression of subject content knowledge	Frequent subject content errors are made due to difficulty in expressing this knowledge in English	Occasional subject content errors are made in such a way that it is difficult to understand what is meant.	Subject content knowledge expression is occasionally unclear, though correct meaning can be derived.	Subject content knowledge errors are rare and alternative explanations are offered.	Subject content knowledge of an appropriate depth and breadth are expressed without error.
Use of code switching	Reliant on code switching to facilitate teaching and learning.	Code switches long phrases or sentences, even when not required for learner understanding.	Occasionally uses words or short phrases in the home language, seemingly when not knowing the English word/phrase.	Code switches occasionally only in short phrases, mostly to translate what has been said in English.	Code switches only to translate what has been said in English, when required to support learner understanding.
Support of learners' English development	Purposeful support not evident	Attempts to explain a word learners do not understand when asked for an explanation.	Spontaneously offers basic explanations for words learners may not understand that are included in the lesson.	Purposefully provides thorough explanation of new or complex words before they are used in the lesson.	Opportunities to support vocabulary are actively/purposefully built into the lesson and used.

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Addendum E Common European Framework of Reference

		A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
UNDERSTANDING	**Listening**	I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
	Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.
SPEAKING	**Spoken Interaction**	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
	Spoken Production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
WRITING	**Writing**	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate needs. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.

Addendum F Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

TESOL Rubric: Speaking

Speaking	Elementary	Pre-intermediate	Intermediate	Upper intermediate	Advanced
Pronunciation	Pronounces very familiar words with constant errors Non-stop hesitations and long pauses Robotic speech	Pronunciation mostly understandable but limited control of stress & rhythm Robotic speech Constant hesitations, repetition and constant pauses	Some pronunciation errors with problematic sounds Some use of robotic speech Hesitates and repeats Many pauses	Intonation, word stress & individual sounds clear with occasional pronunciation errors or slips Some pauses to find word or think about what to say Occasional repetition	Rare slip-ups with pronunciation Few pauses mostly to consider what to say Few hesitations
Vocabulary	Relies on drilled vocab & phrases Repeats memorized words & expressions	Can describe very familiar events, activities, personal experiences & likes/dislikes but uses/overuses a very limited range of adjectives & adverbs	Can describe things & ideas using a limited range of adjectives & adverbs but often errors in word choice & form occur	Has a wide variety of vocab Uses adjectives, adverbs & some precise terminology Can use some phrasal verbs, and idioms & collocations although often used incorrectly	Uses collocations, idioms without hesitation Uses a wide range of less common vocabulary, terminology & jargon for familiar & unfamiliar topics few errors
Grammar	Can form very short pre learned simple sentences based on very familiar topics Attempts at compound sentences are fragmented	Can form simple sentences based on familiar topics Can form basic compound sentences but frequent errors occur Can use some prepositions with many errors Can use basic comparatives & superlatives & 'if' clauses	Can produce compound sentences based on known topics with many errors Can use comparatives & superlatives with some errors Can use 'if' clauses & conditionals although many errors occur	Produces sentences of a more complex nature to express feelings & ideas Can speak on a range of topics using complex sentences although a number of errors occur Can use all 4 conditionals & 'if' clauses	Uses a wide range of grammatical structures & sentence forms accurately with minimal errors
Fluency	Very limited linking devices i.e. but, because, and Very limited if any use of discourse markers	Uses very common linking devices with repetition (overuse) Uses some simple discourse markers	Uses a range of linking devices but sometimes incorrectly Can use a range of discourse markers although errors occur	Uses a wider range of linking devices & discourse markers with few errors	Uses a wide & appropriate range of linking devices & discourse markers with very few errors Speaks confidently on familiar & abstract topics

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Addendum G Test of English for International Communication

Table 2. Description of each task in TOEIC Speaking (ETS, 2013, 2016a).

Task	Question	Evaluation criteria
Read a text aloud	1–2	• Pronunciation • Intonation and stress
Describe a picture	3	All of the above, plus: • Grammar • Vocabulary and cohesion
Respond to questions	4–6	All of the above, plus: • Relevance of content • Completeness of content
Respond to questions, using information provided	7–9	All of the above
Propose a solution	10	All of the above
Express an opinion	11	All of the above

Source: Im & Chang 2019: 318